The Spiritual Language of Art

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The Spiritual Language of Art

Medieval Christian Themes in Writings on Art of the Italian Renaissance

By

Steven F. H. Stowell

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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

This book is dedicated to my parents, Nick and Francine Stowell

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Steven F. H. Stowell
Concordia University, Montreal

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Introduction

The visual arts emerged as topics for literary and theoretical reflection during the Renaissance in Italy: beginning in the fifteenth century, and then in greater numbers throughout the sixteenth century, a variety of writings on art were produced, covering a range of topics and literary genres that is broad in comparison to the preceding centuries. Typically these writings have been studied to shed light on issues that shaped the creation, reception and interpretation of works of art in Renaissance Italy across a wide spectrum of subjects: the education and biography of the artist, the intellectual understanding and philosophy of art, optical theory and the study of anatomy, the reception of works of art, and the relationship between poetry and art, etc. Surprisingly, with some important exceptions, these texts have not been studied for the valuable information they provide on the spiritual experiences within which works of art were embedded. As this study aims to demonstrate, a wide-ranging selection of writings on art may be reread with this issue in mind, illuminating both the spiritual responses evoked by works of art, as well as the spiritual dimensions of artistic practices. Whilst studies of the religious contexts of works of art have investigated, amongst other questions, the rituals in which works of art were used, the iconographic relationships between spiritual sources and works of art, as well as the proscribed theological uses of works of art, the literature on art remains an invaluable body of sources concerning sacred art, revealing the subjective experiences of viewers and creators. By looking at writings on art, we are offered firsthand accounts of the thoughts that structured the reception and creation of works of art.

Outlining the relationship between writings on art and Christian spirituality entails reconstructing the literary sources out of which Italian art discourses emerged. Generally, writings on art have been interpreted in light of the revival of classical literature, and therefore there has been a perceived symmetry between the presence of classical motifs in Renaissance art and the influence of antique sources on writings on art.[1] Although it would certainly

1 With the exception of sources written by theologians to serve ecclesiastical needs, such as Gabriel Paleotti's treatise on art discussed in chapter 5, scholars of the literature on art have been predominantly concerned with the classical tradition. There will be many opportunities to observe this bias throughout this study; in general, classical sources are frequently emphasized in the foundational bibliography written by Julius von Schlosser Magnino, *La letteratura artistica: manuale delle fonti della storia dell'art moderna*, trans. Filippo Rossi (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1935). Schlosser Magnino was also very attentive to the medieval tradition

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be unfair to suggest that the existing scholarship has ignored medieval sources, on balance classical sources tend to be given pride of place, often justifiably. Though the bias for research on classical motifs in Renaissance art has been balanced over the past several decades by art historians whose interests lie in the social and religious functions of images, research into the writings on art from the same period has not engaged with their spiritual content to the same degree. Though an increasing number of scholars study art theory to answer questions that extend beyond the revival of classical literature, there has only been little work done to suggest that Renaissance Italian writings on art might be indebted to medieval spiritual as well as classical sources. Therefore, whilst aiming to illuminate the spiritual experiences of art during the Renaissance from the perspective of Italian writers, I also intend to revisit the question of their intellectual sources, proposing that we can see the influence of Christian as well as classical texts. Given their obvious importance, I do not propose to displace classical sources, but rather to show how multiple voices and intellectual traditions have shaped writings on art. By examining writings on art in light of spiritual literature, one is able to see how the experience and creation of art was articulated using terms that were central to spirituality, offering hitherto unexplored evidence on the nature of spiritual relationships with art objects. My goal is thus twofold: to bring further depth to our understanding of the spiritual relationships formed between artists, viewers and art objects, and to describe how medieval and Renaissance Christian sources (comprising spiritual, theological, and mystical texts) bore upon Italian Renaissance writings on art.

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from which this literature emerged. Close to the same time, Erwin Panofsky surveyed much art theory from antiquity to the Baroque period through the lens of Platonic philosophy, frequently inferring classical rather than medieval sources; see Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. Joseph J.S. Peake (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968; original German text published in 1924). The same preference can be observed in Anthony Blunt's short book (influential amongst English-writing art historians), *Artistic theory in Italy, 1450–1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940). Similarly influential is Rensselaer Lee's essay on the humanist theory of painting in which the unifying theme is the relationship between poetry and painting, a concept attributed to Horace. See Rensselaer W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *The Art Bulletin* 22 (1940). The work of Michael Baxandall has been likewise significant, positing that the language used to discuss art by early humanists was strongly determined by the project of reviving classical Latin; see *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350–1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). There are many exceptions to this general bias, including for example the writings of David Summers and Paul Barolsky.

The primary sources for this study are thus Italian writings on art from roughly 1400–1600. "The literature on art" denotes a selection of texts that modern scholars have grouped together including treatises, dialogues, biographies, ekphrastic descriptions of works of art, instruction manuals, letters and poetry.[2] Though this grouping of texts does not necessarily reflect an Early Modern category, there is evidence to indicate that at times writers and readers saw relationships between these different genres, as demonstrated by the fact that writers on art in one literary form might draw upon or make reference to the writings on art in another form.[3] The analysis here is therefore not limited to one literary genre, seeing as the relationship between spirituality and art did not express itself so narrowly, though consequently this study cannot claim to have surveyed the literature on art in its entirety.[4] In general, however, most of the literature studied here was circulated either as a manuscript or published as a printed book during the Renaissance, and emphasis has been given to prose texts dealing primarily with art rather than books in which visual art is mentioned in passing. The writers of these texts include humanists, scholars, artists, and theologians working throughout Italy.

Methodologically, the approach used in this study is, in some sections, consistent with the majority of studies of the literature on art, and in other sections pushes against and expands upon this approach. Many studies of the literature on art have demonstrated the importance of locating these texts within specific historical and geographical contexts in which language was shaded

2 The genre of literature on art is outlined by Schlosser Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, and more recently discussed by David Summers, introduction to *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Robert Williams, introduction to *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

3 This is evident, to take one example, in the fact that a literary dialogue by Ludovico Dolce appears to refer to the biographies of artists written by Giorgio Vasari. Dolce's literary sources are discussed by Mark Roskill, introduction to *Dolce's 'Aretino' and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (New York: New York University Press, 1968).

4 Regarding these omissions it can only be said that, within the scope of a study of this size, a representative sample of authors from both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and from diverse social and political contexts has been examined. Additionally, the challenge has been taken to speak about certain writers, for example Leonardo da Vinci, who are not traditionally considered to have been greatly influenced by spiritual literature. The attention to prose writings in this book is the reason that Michelangelo's poetry is not examined, however, a recent book by Sarah Rolfe Prodan sheds much new light on this topic: *Michelangelo's Christian Mysticism: Spirituality, Poetry and Art in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); I am grateful to the author for sharing an early draft of this manuscript.

in particular ways.[5] This approach is not rejected in this study, and accordingly, in several chapters, I have aimed to study these texts within the particular contexts in which they were written, considering the authors' known and presumed intellectual sources and literary influences in order to illuminate the spiritual dimensions of their texts. Thus, like many scholars who work on this material, I have engaged these sources with the methodologies developed by literary and intellectual historians for textual analysis. By considering the historical contexts and the intellectual sources of the authors, I have looked for spiritual texts that might throw into relief the spiritual dimensions of their writings on art. This is not primarily a work of philology, though at times this method is used.

The approach outlined above, however, tends to favor a positivistic method of interpreting writings only in light of known sources, whilst it is reasonable to assume that an author's writings are informed by a broad range of intellectual, literary and spiritual sources, not all of them documented and not necessarily textual. Therefore, in certain chapters I have engaged with texts and spiritual traditions, even in the absence of concrete evidence that a particular Renaissance author was engaged with the given tradition. The last chapter of this book, in which certain ideas concerning architecture in the writings of Giorgio Vasari are read in light of architectural motifs in the writings of Hugh of St. Victor, exemplifies this approach. Whilst not wanting to argue that Vasari was definitely influenced by the thinking of Hugh of St. Victor, I have investigated Vasari's literary and cultural milieu, and particularly the writings of his advisors, in order to illustrate how ideas perhaps stemming from Hugh of St. Victor might have formed part of Vasari's spiritual and intellectual framework, even if there is no direct line of influence that has yet come to light.

Likewise in other chapters, not to disregard the differences between authors but rather to show the pervasiveness of Christian themes, I have ranged more freely through a selection of authors not normally considered together. This method can be justified, in part, by pointing out the obvious fact that Christianity pervaded nearly all aspects of life in Early Modern Italy. To discuss Christian themes in the literature of a Florentine author and a Venetian author does not incur quite the same problems that one may encounter writing about the political philosophies of two authors from these two cities in which the lived political realities were distinctly different. This, of course, is not to say that there are no differences whatsoever in the way Christianity was practiced throughout Italy, or that devotional literature of the fifteenth century is interchangeable with that of the sixteenth. There are, however, great continuities in

5 For example Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*.

spirituality between various regions of Italy and between the early Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation, and in certain parts of this book my aim will be to illustrate these continuities, though always with an awareness of the unique local contexts in which these texts were produced. In these cases my method is similar though I have called upon a broader literary context, considering the spiritual sources widely available to readers and writers of Renaissance writings on art. In doing this, I have tried to reconstruct some of the given philosophical, theological and spiritual beliefs that may have been commonly understood across a broad spectrum of literate people by drawing upon the printed spiritual literature of the time as well as medieval literature that is often reprinted in the Renaissance in order to shed light on a given text on art. The spiritual themes that have emerged through this process are often in forms that have been vulgarized from their original source. The third chapter of this study, part of which investigates the theme of 'self-love' in the writings of Leonard da Vinci in light of Augustine's concept of self-love, is an example of this process. Here, texts by Augustine are introduced into the discussion, as well as later texts closer to Leonardo's time (some of which Leonardo may have owned) that make use of Augustine's concept, albeit in a more simplified form. I have thus attempted to reread Renaissance art theory through the lens of this vulgate understanding. Unpacking the varied and multiple cultural and intellectual traditions and ideological structures of a given piece of writing, which often exist unspoken in texts, is an approach that might be likened to Michael Baxandall's concept of the 'period eye,' whereby he attempts to articulate the unspoken framework that shaped visual perception in the fifteenth century.[6] Similarly, this study attempts to uncover the spiritual precepts embedded in writings on art, throwing them into relief sometimes by focusing on the local context in which a given text was produced, and at other times by considering a spectrum of writers who would not normally be considered together due to their geographic or intellectual differences.

There are many ways in which the writings on art can be interrogated for evidence on the spiritual and religious uses of images. This study is concerned primarily with spiritual themes, and therefore does not aim to cover all issues relating to religious themes in writings on art. This is not, for instance, a study of the theological justification of images in the Renaissance, nor is it a study of what images were deemed theologically correct, though questions regarding both these issues are discussed. There is no universal definition of spirituality,

6 See Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), chapter 2 on the period eye. In this book, Baxandall also explores the terms of Renaissance art criticism.

though it can be characterized generally as pertaining to the subject's interior experience of faith, religion, devotion and God through prayer, meditation, reading and the experience of the sacraments, among other things.[7] Some writings on art, primarily those written by ecclesiastical authors who openly address artistic matters from the point of view of faith and theology, have already been the subject of scholarly study on religion and art. This book, on the other hand, discusses such written sources in order to penetrate the spiritual attitudes that were thought to guide the creation and experience of works of art. Beyond looking to texts written by ecclesiastical authors, this study also investigates spiritual themes as they appear in texts written by lay authors dealing with both sacred and secular art and artistic practices more generally. Spiritual themes thus reveal themselves in explicit discussions of an art object's spiritual efficacy, but also through the metaphorical language used, and the more subtle choices and inclinations expressed by Renaissance authors regarding ideals of art and practice. Reading the literature on art in light of spiritual themes involves exposing how attitudes to painting practices, for example, are articulated in terms reminiscent of spirituality, prayer and meditation, how the terms and concepts used to describe the experience and reception of both secular and sacred art reflect spiritual experiences, and how the qualities desired in works of art are shaped by spiritual concerns.

The spiritual experience of art that I aim to describe in this study is characterized by a particular relationship to the techniques of visual representation now known as naturalism. In this way, this study engages with an issue that might be considered paradigmatic of Renaissance art history: in a student's earliest exposure to European art history, he or she is often taught that the fundamental development distinguishing the Renaissance from the Middle Ages is the use of pictorial techniques that represent the natural world consistently according to rational principles.[8] Increasingly in recent decades, changing artistic practices and techniques for making images have been posited

7 Useful discussions can be found in Bernard McGinn, introduction to *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, with Jean Leclercq (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), see xvi: "It is possible to distinguish spirituality from doctrine in that it concentrates not on faith itself, but on the reaction that faith arouses in religious consciousness and practice." Likewise, see Ewert Cousins, "Preface to the Series," in the same text, xii. "This spiritual core is the deepest centre of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality . . . It deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of the spiritual journey, and the method of advancement in the spiritual ascent." Ibid., xiii.

8 On naturalism, see David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3–9.

by scholars as having played a role in producing new relationships between viewers and paintings of sacred images, and the findings of this study have a bearing on this discussion.

Most influentially, Hans Belting's history of cult images presents the Renaissance as the turning point during which the "presence" of holy persons faded from their images, and images became viewed instead as the artist's presentation of the sacred figure or historical moment.[9] Various factors such as the turn to naturalism, objections to images during the Reformation, and the multiple devotional practices that attended them, contributed to this change. Intuitively one might suppose that naturalism would have heightened the spiritual presence of the represented figure, and scholars have likewise discussed how naturalism allowed artists to present spiritual images with a new directness.[10] The changing techniques of art making, and the resulting spiritual possibilities of images, have been revisited in recent scholarly arguments that also discuss various "controversies" and "dilemmas" occurring in Renaissance art. Marcia Hall has examined how various artists responded to the challenges facing practitioners of sacred art following the Council of Trent, noting also the problems that arose with the increased naturalism of holy images, which seemed to present the divine realm as continuous with our own.[11] Alexander Nagel's recent study has likewise drawn attention to religious reform as a vital factor, shaping Renaissance art in a condition of "controversy."[12] Belting, Hall, Nagel and others approach the changes that occurred within the art of Renaissance Italy with varying methods—in ways that cannot be unpacked at length here—though each observes changes in Renaissance art within the context of the religious Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This religious

9 See Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), particularly chapter 20.

10 See for example Paul Barolsky, "Naturalism and the Visionary Art of the Early Renaissance," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, 129 (1997). A most provoking suggestion appears in Megan Holmes' study of miraculous images in Renaissance Florence, which notes how the veneration of miraculous images grew in Florence during the period she identifies as initiating the decline of the image's "presence." See "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence," *Art History* 34 (2011), 437; this publication was followed by her book *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), the full findings of which appeared too recently to be incorporated into this study.

11 See Marcia B. Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art: Titian, Tintoretto, Barocci, El Greco, Caravaggio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

12 See Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

context, as is well known, made the status of sacred images a material problem, necessitating the Catholic Church to revisit and reaffirm the official doctrine legitimizing their use at the Council of Trent. Naturalism, logically, has a place within this discussion since it has been classically argued that the emergence of naturalism was related to a preceding spiritual movement, the mendicant movement, which encouraged vivid imaginings of sacred history.[13] Thus, a theme in recent and not-so-recent art historical research frames the issue of naturalism, coming to fruition not long before the Reformation and not long after the mendicant movement, as having had important consequences for sacred images, allowing artists to articulate and visualize sacred personages and history in new ways, but also causing considerable tensions within the devotional sphere, perhaps removing the "presence" of holy figures from their images, or provoking new artistic experiments that might reaffirm the spiritual effectiveness of sacred art. The evidence of this study—whilst not aiming to reconcile the divergent views on naturalism and sacred art and related spiritual movements, nor to definitively define the new spiritual experiences that naturalism made possible—offers fresh evidence on the problem and, therefore, while presenting a rereading of the literature on art and its sources, aims also to deepen the discussion on this problem through a sustained engagement with a group of sources in which contemporary writers expressed their thoughts on art.

When read in light of spiritual sources, writings on art suggest that naturalistic representational techniques were thought to bring viewers closer to meaning than previous signs had, and the meaning to which these signs pointed was God.[14] This is not to say simply that these pictures were believed

13 See discussion and bibliography in chapter 5.

14 On signs in Christian philosophy, see Marcia Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), especially chapter 1. Colish investigates the medieval philosophy of signs, particularly St. Augustine's, noting how "God creates the world and man through his Word, and he takes on humanity in the Word made flesh so that human words may take on divinity, thereby bringing man and the world back to God," 26. However, "Augustine was forced to conclude that although redeemed speech may be truly expressive, it is not always completely efficacious in conveying the knowledge of God," 38. Throughout this study I will be demonstrating how we might think of Renaissance images as redeemed signs that surpass some of the barriers that prevented linguistic signs from expressing knowledge of God (Colish's study investigates the tradition of Augustine's philosophy of signs up to Dante). I do not, however, argue that these paintings and sculptures were perceived to have completely overcome these barriers. See also Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge:

to look more like their subjects in the sense that a naturalistic painting of the Crucifixion looked more like the Crucifixion than, say, a gothic painting of the same subject (forgetting, for the moment, that this implies the possibility of objectively determining what looks more like something than another thing); rather, "meaning," in the sentence above, refers to the spiritual meaning of the Crucifixion of Christ, the spiritual reality of salvation for Christians. Thus, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters with reference to the semiotics of St. Augustine, if signs mediate a viewer's understanding of meaning by pointing, however imperfectly, to a particular meaning, then the naturalistic Crucifixion would appear to be a more effective sign, bringing the viewer closer to the signified meaning. The evidence that I will present in support of this argument does not exclusively concern the degree to which the resulting Crucifixion was thought to "look like" the original Crucifixion; that is, the efficacy of naturalistic images of sacred subjects is not entirely dependent on its visual semblance, though this is a factor. Rather, the efficacy of the sign would appear to stem from the fact that the image is a trace of the artist's own spiritual engagement with the meaning of the Crucifixion. It is only fitting that the interior and spiritual engagement of the artist should play a role in augmenting the quality of a visual sign in Christian art, since the interior quality of the written signs of the Bible played a fundamental role in Christian spirituality. I argue, therefore, that the work of art is undeniably more intimately associated with the artist, though that it is not necessarily less spiritual for this. In the chapters that follow I will examine this theme as presented in the writings of various authors, each of whom appears to present some evidence in support of this idea, each articulating this concept according to their own particular artistic concerns and thus emphasizing different facets of this general theme. Moreover, as I hope to demonstrate, the efficacy of naturalistic signs does not appear to preclude, in the minds of Renaissance authors, other kinds of efficacy (arising, for instance, from images that are less naturalistic), raising the possibility of multiple approaches to the divine. The multiple approaches to God are perhaps most relevant to a consideration of art in late medieval and Early Modern Europe in light of the fact that this was a period during which images from many periods, embracing many different styles and techniques, lived side by side in devotional contexts.

Thus, at the moment in Western history when the visual arts (primarily painting and sculpture) were becoming objects of discussion, the experience of art was articulated using the terms of spiritual experience. Much of

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Cambridge University Press, 1991), 42–43, on the primacy of divine signification versus the instability of words.

this book is dedicated to revealing how artistic practice was conceptualized in terms that demonstrated the spiritual value of the artist's task. This central theme is developed in the middle chapters of this study (chapter two through five), and it is framed by the first and last chapters, each of which are more concerned about how works of art were experienced by viewers, the first chapter being about a miracle-working painting and the final chapter dealing largely with a dialogue on a series of secular images that nonetheless reveal the persistence of spiritual themes.

Thus, though this is not a chronological study, this study aims to trace a single arc of logic. The primary concern in the first chapter is to identify the experience of spiritual compunction as a meaningful lens through which to view the myriad of Christian themes in writings on art. Compunction, related closely to religious penitence, was a central experience in Early Modern Christian spirituality and one that was frequently stimulated through gazing upon (or otherwise interacting with) a material object, either a relic or, increasingly in the Early Modern period, an image; compunction thus serves as a central theme from which many attendant issues stem. To examine this experience, the writings of one sixteenth-century author will be treated in depth: the Florentine scholar Francesco Bocchi, author of numerous treatises on art. One text by Bocchi in particular offers insight into what may be called a truly mystical experience of art: the reaction of viewers to the miracle-working image of the Annunciation at the Santissima Annunziata in Florence. By unpacking the language of compunction utilized by Bocchi to discuss this work of art, and by placing Bocchi's discussion more broadly within the devotional context of Renaissance Florence, it becomes clear that Bocchi's terms apply equally to works of art that were not miracle-working. This suggests, therefore, a line of continuity between the works of men and the works of God, with Bocchi clearly implying that all artists should strive to match the spiritual efficacy of the miraculous image.

This first chapter is in some ways a prelude to the larger argument about how artists orient themselves in relationship to the natural objects they study and the sacred subjects they represent in images. The experience of compunction in Bocchi's text entails a complex relationship to materiality: religious compunction often motivates the rejection of material and sensuous experiences, and yet paradoxically it would appear that material objects—particularly, in this case, paintings—had the capacity to provoke this experience. This problem, which is deeply related to the problem of idolatry and the devotion to images in general in a Christian context, is a central theme in this study. As will be discussed, the relationships forged between artists and the subjects they

represented naturalistically bear upon discussions of the materiality of art and art making.

If, by Bocchi's account, the works of men were supposed to approach the works of God, this would indicate that artists potentially had a certain closeness to Him. That artists were frequently praised for being "divine" is well known.[15] Chapters two, three, four and five thus investigate how artists were able to bring themselves closer to the will of God, a closeness which often concerned the artist's relationship to materiality. Chapter two turns to the book of art theory that is often said to have initiated the theoretical discourse on art, Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura*. Although the text does not obviously pertain to spiritual discourse, when the text is viewed within the Christian tradition of the liberal arts, there are many resonances with contemplative study that may be perceived. Although Alberti is known for being one of the first to advocate the sustained study of nature as a prelude to artistic activity, close reading of his text reveals harmonies between the artist's practice and meditation. Particularly, my concern is to demonstrate how Alberti recommends that artists take a particular position with respect to the objects of nature that they study and the material objects of art they produce. Thus, the study of nature and the naturalistic images that it creates demands from the artist a particular habit of mind that resists the material and sensuous temptations of nature: not to engage with nature with a sensuous desire but rather only to find God's presence within it.

To some readers this may seem to revisit an earlier theory of Renaissance art, notably explored by Panofsky, that in the Renaissance, naturalistic paintings or sculptures were believed to have had some closeness to the Platonic Ideas: artists could find the laws of nature, or the divine Forms upon which all forms are based, by using their judgment.[16] Throughout this study, the similarities and differences between Platonism and Christianity will be reflected upon, while the argument will be made that in some cases evidence of Neoplatonic philosophy in writings on art may best be illuminated by Christian texts. Though there are many similarities, the meaning of God in the Christian religion is

15 On the history of this term as applied to artists, see Patricia A. Emison, *Creating the "Divine" Artist: From Dante to Michelangelo* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

16 See Panofsky, *Idea*, 65. "An Idea which is produced by the human mind but . . . at the same time expresses the laws of nature embodied in each object, achieves basically the same thing . . . that Alberti, Leonardo, and Dürer had tried to achieve."

not philosophically identical with the Platonic Ideas.[17] For example, for the Christian it would not be enough to know that he or she could improve upon nature in his or her pictorial imitation: he or she would also have to believe that in painting such an ideal nature, he or she was behaving in accordance to God's will. Making art as a religious practice, however, does not figure prominently in Panofsky's discussion of the philosophy of Ideas in Renaissance art theory. Although this is not an adequate representation of Panofsky's thesis (nor is it intended as a refutation), it does highlight some questions that have not been greatly discussed in Renaissance art theory: though there has been ample discussion on what subjects were thought to be religiously correct topics for painting, fewer scholars have inquired into what intention of mind might have been required of a Renaissance artist to paint any given subject. That is, how specifically could the action of painting bring the artist to God (and consequently lead the viewer to God as well)? Given two identical looking paintings of the Crucifixion, how could one convey the knowledge of God more than the other? It shall be argued that this was believed not only to be possible but was also a recurring theme in the literature on art.

Chapter three develops the argument concerning Alberti by considering the writings of the author and artist often said to be his successor in the field of art theory, Leonardo da Vinci. Starting with a group of spiritual texts included in a list of books drawn up by Leonardo, presumably indicating the contents of his library, I illustrate how writings on artistic practice in his manuscripts recall principles found in the popular spiritual texts he owned. As in Alberti, many precepts regarding artistic study echo ideals of contemplation. Themes relating to communication through visual art also appear to be closely related to discussions regarding signs and the imperfection of communication after the fall of man. Within a discourse on the imperfection of man's signs, Leonardo appears to posit the painter's signs as nearer to perfection, using language shaded with spiritual meanings to convey this argument.

As noted, the textual sources for this study encompass a broad historical period, during which time several changes affected the exchange of literary ideas and the history of art. One factor was the changing nature of the reading public as a result of the printing press. With regard to fifteenth-century writings, manuscripts were circulated amongst a small group of elite readers.[18] The sixteenth century saw greater numbers of authors writing on art and, likewise,

17 In general, see Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (*Gifford Lectures 1931–1932*), trans. A.H.C. Downes (London: Sheed & Ward, 1936; facs. ed., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

18 See Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 127–129.

greater numbers of readers. Many books written on art during this period had the potential, sometimes fulfilled, to reach a large number of educated upper-class readers.[19] Judging by their appearance, form, and literary tone, these books were often meant for general consumption.[20] Accordingly, in chapters four and five, a range of printed sources are considered together, looking at how they relate both to one another and the printed spiritual sources of the time. These chapters likewise broadly consider the question of how artists imagined and visualized sacred topics.

In chapter four I move from a consideration of the intellectual habit that characterizes the study of nature in Alberti and Leonardo, and introduce a discussion of the problems and concerns that artists faced representing the bodies that appeared in sacred histories, and the challenges of representing the soul that animated the body. This question is divided into two parts: how was it that bodies could make evident the virtue of the soul, and, secondly, how was the painter capable of imagining perfect virtue as seen on the body of a sacred figure? With respect to the second question, the problems that Renaissance artists encountered while trying to imagine faces are explored, noting that the progress of an artist could proceed down two paths: first, the improvement of the science of his or her art (his or her ability to represent the material world), or, secondly, the improvement of his or her soul. An attendant issue explored here is the manner in which Renaissance artists used the techniques of naturalism to "animate" their products, not only by giving life-likeness to their figures, but also by embedding various devotional practices that were customarily believed to enhance the "presence" of a devotional object—such as the veiling of sacred objects and images—into the very practice of painting. The second part of chapter four explores how virtue could reside on the face or on the body of the virtuous person, considering the problematic desire to

19 The two editions of Giorgio Vasari's biographies of Renaissance artists (1550 & 1568) attest to the popularity a book on art could achieve.

20 On the design of popular books, see Paul F. Grendler, "Form and Function in Italian Renaissance Popular Books," *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (1993). See also D.R. Edward Wright, "Structure and Significance in Dolce's L'Aretino," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (1987), 280. Recently Charles Hope, "The Audiences for Publications on the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy," in *Officine del nuovo: Sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma: atti del simposio internazionale, Utrecht 8–10 novembre 2007*, ed. Harald Hendrix and Paolo Procaccioli (Manziana: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2008), has discussed the readers of Renaissance writings on art. See also Thomas Frangenberg, *Der Betrachter: Studien zur florentinischen Kunstliteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1990), which discusses literature on art by and for readers who were not artists.

"see" virtue, even though, in Christian philosophy, it was not possible to measure a person's virtue by his or her outward appearance. At issue here are the different values of signs according to the semiotic theories of St. Augustine. By reading Renaissance art theory in light of Augustine's semiotics, naturalistic paintings and sculptures emerge, particularly in the writings of Francesco Bocchi, as particularly efficient signs conducive to spiritual experiences.

The effects of the Counter-Reformation have also been noted as a substantial cultural development that impacted Renaissance writings on art. Chapter five considers the effects of the Counter-Reformation in relation to the broader question of how artists imagined moments from sacred history. As will become clear throughout this book, I treat the Counter-Reformation less as a marked shift in the general attitude towards art, and more as an event that emphasized beliefs that could already be perceived in earlier writings on art, if less prominently. There are thus continuities that exist between the literature on art before and after the Counter-Reformation, and it is valid to attend to the themes that unite these two periods. The Counter-Reformation theologian Gabriele Paleotti is a central focus of this chapter, and yet relationships between his writings and those of Giorgio Vasari, Ludovico Dolce and others are noted. Progressing from a consideration of bodies (in chapter four), chapter five investigates the challenges of creating a pictorial composition of a sacred narrative, or pictorial invention. Considering the history of the word "invention" reveals how the composition of a historical narrative engaged with the traditions of biblical exegesis, contemplative invention and sacred oratory. The representation of nature, as discussed in this chapter, becomes deeply related to and guided by scriptural exegesis, and the intellectual and artistic habits discussed in chapters two and three are implicated within the contemplative tradition of ruminating on and amplifying the Bible.

Having discussed the spiritual dimension of artistic practice in the middle four chapters of this book, the final chapter returns to the experience of visual art from the viewer's perspective, though focusing primarily on a text describing the experience of secular art. Chapter six investigates spiritual themes in the writings of likely the most-read sixteenth-century writer on art, Giorgio Vasari. Looking particularly at architectural themes in both his biographical writings as well as his literary descriptions of his own paintings, I consider how his concept of architecture calls upon a range of spiritual themes engaging with, amongst other things, biblical hermeneutics and the spiritual meanings of history. This discussion culminates in a meditation on the similarities between Vasari's literary descriptions of his own, secular works of art in the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence, and a method of biblical exegesis developed by Hugh of St. Victor, demonstrating how Christian sources are woven

into discussions of secular art, provoking questions on the lingering spiritual importance of such cultural migrations.

Though this study cannot be an exhaustive history of Christian themes in writings on art, it does aim to present a representative sample comprising numerous literary perspectives that reveal their debt to the language developed by spiritual writers from early Christianity through the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Unpacking the relationship between medieval Christian sources and Renaissance writings on art offers a view onto the spiritual experiences related to the creation of and experience of visual art in Early Modern Italy; these sources are particularly valuable for offering a perspective on the subjective interior experiences and methods associated with artistic experience.

CHAPTER 1

Art and Compunction: Francesco Bocchi's Mystical Experience of Art

Compunction in Renaissance Literature on Art

The flowering of literature on art during the Italian Renaissance, as discussed in the introduction, has often been linked to humanist interest in classical culture. Despite the clear relationship between the two, it would be difficult to deny the presence of Christian themes in Renaissance writings on art, though no thorough attempt has been made to delineate their scope and character. Amidst the variety of devotional patterns and practices that shaped Renaissance attitudes toward art (and therefore, amidst the many possible starting points for this study), the theme of religious compunction and penitence is particularly rich and I have chosen it as a lens through which to view the myriad of spiritual motifs that are woven into fifteenth- and sixteenth-century texts on art in Italy. This chapter will outline the nature of religious compunction and illustrate how it can help unpack many spiritual terms, metaphors and concepts in Italian Renaissance writings on art. Following this, a more in-depth consideration of one particular sixteenth-century text on art, Francesco Bocchi's treatise in praise of the miracle-working image of the Annunciation at the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence, will further reveal the complex interrelationships between the devotional experience of compunction and the writings on art of the Italian Renaissance. Throughout this book, compunction will continue to serve as a point of orientation, bringing into focus the spiritual qualities of writings on art.

Compunction is an enduring element in Christian spirituality. It had a strong presence in Latin patristic literature as well as in spiritual texts of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Briefly stated, compunction is a movement of God within the soul causing man or woman to feel grief for his or her sins, inspiring him or her to reject worldly goods, to purge his or her soul, and finally to rebuild his or her soul in God alone.[1] It is related to the guilt and misery that comes from worldly experience and, in contemporary parlance,

1 For an overview, see *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 2nd ed., 15 vols. (Detroit: Thomson Gale, in association with the Catholic University of America, 2003), s.v. "compunction." The literature on compunction is surveyed in Piroska Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen âge: un instrument*

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compunction often means simply guilt. In the medieval Christian tradition, as described by the medieval historian Jean Leclercq, within the worldly misery of terrestrial life, the grace of God was said to provoke an internal "piercing" or "pressing" (*cum-pungere*), a spiritual pain that motivated man to reject sensual pleasure and to love only the spiritual gifts of God.[2] Leclercq writes that compunction was a "pain of the spirit" leading to "humility, detachment from the world . . . and the consciousness of our need for God."[3]

Compunction, therefore, entailed both the pain of guilt and the joy of God's love.[4] The notion of painful love, naturally, precedes Christianity, and occurs for instance in the Song of Songs, where the bridegroom reveals that the bride has "ravished [his] heart with a glance of [her] eyes" (Song of Sol. 4:9);[5] equally, in pagan sources, cupid literally pierces the heart with love.[6] In St. Augustine's

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spirituel en quête d'institution (*V^e–XIII^e siècle*), preface Alain Boureau (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000), 29–33.

2 "In its original profane use, the word 'compunction' is a medical term, designating attacks of acute pain, of physical illness . . . Compunction becomes pain of the spirit." See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: New American Library, 1962), 29–30.

3 Ibid., 29. Leclercq is speaking specifically of the experience of compunction in the writings of St. Gregory the Great. On the compunction of Gregory, see also Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Modern Library, 2006), 367–373, and Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 2: 58–50.

4 On the double aspect of compunction see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 29–31. Also see Carol Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), chapter 11, 23n72. On the mystical meaning of compunction, and tears as signs of God's grace, see Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge*. For a summary of mystical themes in Gregory the Great, including compunction, see McGinn, *Essential Writings*, 367 and McGinn, *Presence of God*, 2: 49. For a discussion of compunction as a meditative experience in the monastic tradition, see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 96.

5 Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the Bible in English come from the New Revised Standard Version in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible. Augmented Third Edition*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, with assoc. eds. Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). "vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum." (Latin Vulgate). Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the Latin Vulgate Bible come from the *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis*, ed. P. Michael Hetzenauer (Rome & Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1914).

6 Cupid's arrows are introduced into Latin literature in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. The medieval intermingling of pagan and biblical sources regarding the wounds of love are discussed in Barbara Newman, "Christ as Cupid in Art and Devotion," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 264.

Confessions, it is specifically God that "pierced our hearts with the arrow of [his] love" (hence Augustine's well-known emblem of a heart pierced by arrows), whilst the joy of God's love is accompanied by feelings of guilt for previous sins: the "weltering in filth and rubbing the scab of lust."[7] Amongst medieval Christian authors, the linked pains and pleasures of compunction are amplified in the writings of St. Gregory the Great, who wrote that God

> at one time . . . pierces us with love; at another time with terror. Sometimes he . . . lifts up our hearts to desire the eternal world . . . Sometimes he discloses to us our own evil deeds . . . pierced with a wonderful feeling of compunction.[8]

Gregory especially promulgated the theme of compunction among countless writers throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance and, as shall be seen, the penitential dimensions of this subject became important in Italian texts from the late Middle Ages and Renaissance.

In Gregory's writings and in those of other medieval authors, compunction is often a mystical experience in which it is "God Himself who is working in us by His mysterious action."[9] Likewise, St. Bernard of Clairvaux described the presence of Christ within him as a "motion of [his] heart," as a result of which "vices were banished and . . . carnal desires were repressed."[10] Consequently, Bernard "perceived [Christ's] beauty from the recasting and renewal of the

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7 Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F.J. Sheed, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 9.2.3 and 9.1.1. "Sagittaveras tu cor nostrum charitate tua, et gestabamus verba tua transfixa visceribus"; "Jam liber erat animus meus a curis mordacibus ambiendi et acquirendi, et volutandi atque scalpendi scabiem libidinum." Augustine, *Confessiones*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, 1844–65), 032.0763–0764; henceforth all citations from the *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina*, will be cited as Migne, *PL*. On Augustine's emblem and the literary reception and transmission of this passage in the Middle Ages, see Newman, "Christ as Cupid," 269.

8 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*; translation in McGinn, *Essential Writings*, 368. "Aliquando enim nos amore, aliquando terrore compungit; aliquando praesentia quam nulla sint ostendit, et ad aeterna diligenda desiderium erigit; . . . Aliquando nostra nobis mala aperit, et ad hoc nos usque, ut alienis etiam malis doleamus, extendi. Aliquando mala aliena nostris obtutibus objicit, et compunctos mirabiliter a nostra pravitate nos corrigit." Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, 5.29.51 (Migne, *PL* 075.0706).

9 Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 30. See also McGinn, *Essential Writings*, 367. Compunction is not always a mystical experience; see McGinn, *Presence of God*, 2: 49.

10 Bernard of Clairvaux, translation in McGinn, *Essential Writings*, 224. "et ex fuga vitiorum, carnaliumque compressione affactuum adverti potentiam virtutis ejus." Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi sermones in cantica*, Sermo 74 (Migne, *PL* 183.1141).

mind's spirit, that is, the interior self."[11] Compunction, however, as scholars have noted, might equally be provoked by one's own meditations and contemplations.[12] Given that meditation and prayer centered upon the contemplation of visual images, and the fact that sacred art served to stimulate penitence, it is natural that compunction should be associated with works of visual art.[13] Moreover, as shall be seen, in Early Modern writings it is clear that compunction could be provoked by immediate sensual contact with a painting.

The concept of being pierced visually by love is present already in the Song of Songs in which it is the eye of the lover that wounds the bridegroom, a motif that is later elaborated in chivalric romances and spiritual writings of the High Middle Ages.[14] Notably, some Renaissance sources suggest that the idea of being pierced visually was blended with the theory of optics and perspective. For instance, Michael Kubovy has presented several Renaissance texts on perspective that metaphorically speak of perspectival illusion as an arrow piercing the eye.[15] As Kubovy notes, some Renaissance paintings appear to make reference to this metaphor, suggesting specifically an image by Andrea Mantegna

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11 Bernard of Clairvaux, translation from McGinn, *Essential Writings*, 224. "et ex renovatione ac reformatione spiritus mentis meae, id est interioris hominis mei, percepi utcunque speciem decoris ejus." Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sancti Bernardi sermones in cantica* Sermo 74 (Migne, *PL* 183.1141).

12 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 95–96, has described how compunction was a feeling that was self-induced during monastic prayer.

13 The literature on the topic of visual imagery and meditation is extensive, and is discussed in more depth in chapter 5. On affective meditation, see Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). On Franciscanism and visual imagery in sermons and meditation in the Florentine High Middle Ages, see Daniel Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), and Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1989). On the influence of this meditative tradition on art, see, for example, the essays in Hamburger and Bouché, *The Mind's Eye*; a much cited discussion of this concept with respect to Italian art is Michael Baxandall's *Painting and Experience*, 45–56. On general devotional attitudes toward religious images see Michele Bacci, "*Pro remedio animae:" immagini sacre e pratiche in Italia centrale* (*secoli XIII e XIV*) (Pisa: ETS, 2000).

14 As in, for example, the writings of Gilbert of Hoyland and Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, both discussed with respect to this theme in Newman, "Christ as Cupid," 271 and 281 respectively.

15 Michael Kubovy, *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 10–15.

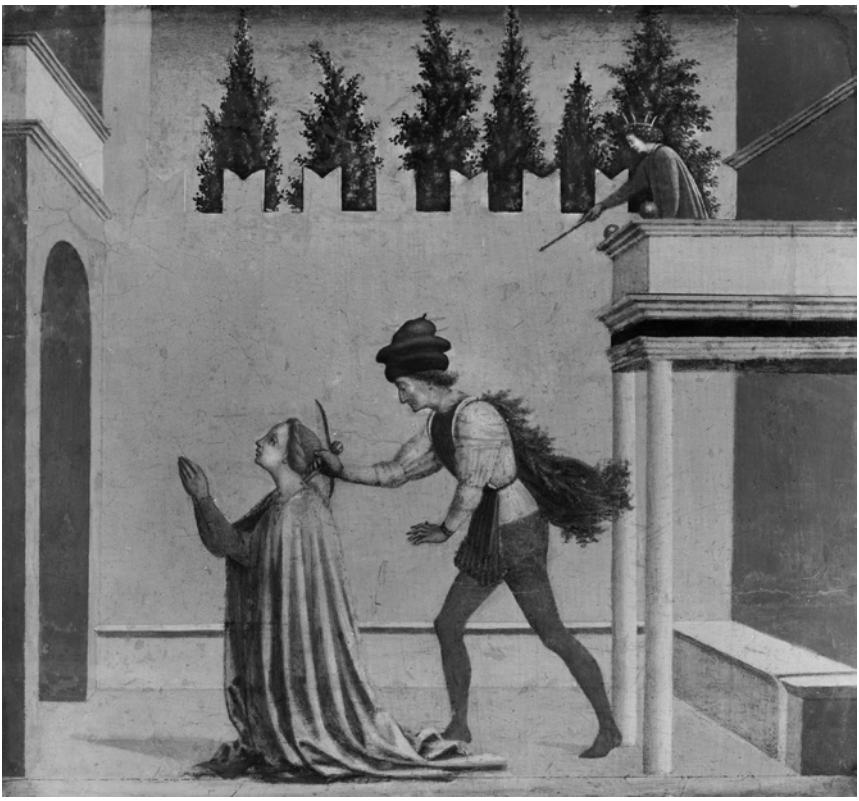

FIGURE 1 *Domenico Veneziano*, Martyrdom of Saint Lucy (*1445/48*). *Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany.*
PHOTO CREDIT: BPK, BERLIN, GEMÄLDEGALERIE, STAATLICHE MUSEEN, BERLIN / JÖRG P. ANDERS / ART RESOURCE, NY.

depicting a figure struck by an arrow in the eye. Likewise, I suggest that in this and another painting discussed by Kubovy by Domenico Veneziano, of the piercing of a body directly over the painting's vanishing point, we may perceive further spiritual meanings.[16] For instance, Veneziano's *Martyrdom of Saint Lucy* places the vanishing point of the composition directly over the hand carrying the knife that pierces Saint Lucy's neck, hence merging the point opposite of which the painting is ideally viewed with the instrument that leads to the Saint's martyrdom (Figure 1).

16 Ibid., 10–15. Kubovy discusses these paintings, though not to explore their spiritual implications. More recently on the spiritual implications of perspective see John F. Moffitt, *Painterly Perspective and Piety: Religious Uses of the Vanishing Point, from the 15th to the 18th Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008).

FIGURE 2 *Andrea Mantegna*, The Martyrdom and Translocation of the Body of Saint Christopher (*detail of people in windows*) (*1451–5*). *Ovetari Chapel, Chiesa degli Eremitani, Padua, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: CAMERAPHOTO ARTE, VENICE / ART RESOURCE, NY.

The composition may suggest that the painting strikes our eye much like the knife strikes Lucy. In another instance, Mantegna's painting of *The Martyrdom and Translocation of the Body of Saint Christopher* shows King Samos being pierced in the eye by an arrow intended for Saint Christopher, the wound of which is afterward healed when it is bathed in the blood of the later decapitated Saint, a miracle that then persuades the King to convert to Christianity (Figure 2).[17]

This story from the *Golden Legend*, illustrated with perspectival accuracy by Mantegna, demonstrates literally the propositions made metaphorically in the writings discussed above: namely, that a life of sin brings the pain of compunction through which we regain "true" sight and joy. Without discussing in-depth the mingling of spiritual language and perspectival technique, the overlapping themes suggest that the literary trope of piercing the soul through the eye was implicated in the emerging art of perspective and naturalism more broadly. Thus, the common motif of love puncturing the eye, as well as the widespread

17 Kubovy, *Pyschology of Perspective*, 8–9.

practice of using mental pictures and images in meditations aiming to provoke compunction, may in part explain how compunction emerges naturally as a theme in Renaissance writings on visual art.

Some aspects of compunction discussed above relate to questions being explored in contemporary art-historical scholarship, for instance the importance of sight to conversion, the relationship between the mystical experience and art, and the rejection of the material world. Recent art-historical scholarship has noted the primacy of sight in the religious experiences of the Early Modern period, particularly with respect to penitence and conversion. Thomas Worcester has examined images in Early Modern Italy as evidence of a spirituality of hope and conversion or transformation, adding complexity to the understanding of Early Modern spirituality that emerges from the study of texts alone.[18] In paintings that actually depict religious conversion or mystical union, scholars have also noted how questions about naturalistic painting are foregrounded in these images, since they purport to record the visual appearances of interior experiences and visions of a celestial nature. A classic example of this tension emerges in paintings of mystical union that border on the erotic, and Victor Stoichita, for example, has investigated various strategies used by Spanish artists to depict the "multi-sensory experience" of mystical union in art.[19] The problems associated with having the real and celestial worlds overlap are also discussed recently in Alexander Nagel's broad exploration of Renaissance art of the first half of the sixteenth; among the various case studies presented by Nagel, for example, are the problems that emerge when the naturalistic depiction of sacred history becomes a stage for the likenesses of contemporary people in the guise of holy people, thereby doubling representations and making the religious image an opportunity for display.[20]

Also at issue in these converging paths in art-historical scholarship are questions regarding the charismatic appeal and contradictory qualities of art objects which use material substances manipulated by artistic craft to seduce and engage viewers into holy experiences that aim ultimately to inspire Christians to reject these sensory pleasures. Questions regarding the materiality of images, and the desire for spiritual elevation are also evident, for example,

18 See Thomas Worcester, "Trent and Beyond: Arts of Transformation," in *Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio and the Baroque Image*, ed. Franco Mormando (Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1999).

19 Victor I. Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), 123, and in general see chapter 6 on the "mystical eros.".

20 Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, 13–29.

in writings on medieval art by Herbert Kessler and Caroline Walker Bynum.[21] Some central themes in recent art-historical scholarship thus examine sacred art, particularly in the Early Modern period when image-making techniques were shifting toward greater naturalism and thereby combining manual craft with a rational understanding of visual perception, and questions what implications this had for the viewer's spiritual relationship to the art object. Related to this are questions regarding the relationship between conversion, and the new status of the artist and the image. In this chapter, I explore how looking at the theme of compunction in writings on art from Renaissance Italy sheds light on Early Modern attitudes regarding the sensuous appeal of images and conversion.

Though to my knowledge no study has examined the presence of compunctive themes in Renaissance literature on art, the common literary patterns that had conventionally evoked the experience of compunction in spiritual literature of the Middle Ages are frequently rehearsed in the Renaissance to discuss the experience of art: the tears of repentance and joy, the purging and nourishing of the soul, the rejection of the material world, and the journey upward toward God. Though later in this chapter the theme of compunction will be treated with respect to a very particular artistic, literary and spiritual context in the sixteenth century (the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence), at the moment I will range through a selection of Early Modern Italian writers (mainly from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) to demonstrate the presence and importance of this theme in general.

Paintings could play an integral part in the experience of compunction in late medieval Italy, as is illustrated in a passage from the widely circulated book that illuminates many of the themes discussed in this chapter: *Lo specchio della vera penitenza* (The mirror of true penitence) by the Florentine friar Jacopo Passavanti (1302–1357).[22] Passavanti recalls the story of a young nobleman, hoping to regain his riches, who renounces his faith in Christ when urged to do so by a demon. The young man is overcome with grief, however, when he is asked to renounce the Virgin Mary. He leaves the demon feeling "penitent and compuncted," and then goes to a church where he finds "a Virgin Mary with the [Christ] Child in her arms, painted and sculpted of wood," before

21 See Herbert L. Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

22 On penitential texts and the Franciscan movement in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see John V. Fleming, *An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 167–173.

which he begins crying and "asks mercy and pardon for the great wrong he had committed."[23] Eventually the figures in the painted panel begin speaking with one another, and the Virgin implores her Son to have mercy on the young man until Christ reluctantly yields to her petitions.[24] Through the prevalent cult of Mary in the late Middle Ages, the story demonstrates the extent to which an image could participate in the compunctive and penitential experience leading to conversion and redemption. It is an act of God that brings the art object to life, though through this story the reader understands that the art object is a gateway through which the prayers of the nobleman are channeled toward Mary and Christ, acting as a bridge between the penitent and the sacred.[25] The story is an apt example of medieval attitudes toward images, since divine intervention enlivens the material object, and questions about the artist's agency are not part of the narrative.

The late medieval attitudes toward paintings embedded within this story recur in similar passages found in Renaissance literature. Sometimes medieval sources are openly cited in Renaissance texts, illustrating a continuous tradition, as is the case in the theologian Gregorio Comanini's *Il Figino overo del fine della pittura* (*The Figino, or, On the Purpose of Painting*), a dialogue on painting from 1591 set in northern Italy. To properly contextualize Comanini's use of medieval sources it must be placed within the context of the Counter-Reformation and the heightened religious conservatism that followed the Council of Trent (a topic treated in later chapters). Presently, however, his text serves to illustrate the presence of compunctive themes in Renaissance literature and the continuing relevance of medieval spiritual experiences. In a passage discussing the religious use of images, the interlocutors frequently cite the proceedings of the Second Council of Nicaea (787), at which the use of sacred icons was affirmed.[26] Comanini's interlocutors inform readers that

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23 "E vegnendo per la via, e ripensando il grande suo peccato d'avere rinnegato iddio, pentuto e compunto entrò in una chiesa, dov'era la Vergine Maria dipinta col Figliuolo in braccio, di legname scolpita; davanti alla quale riverentemente inginocchiandosi e dirottamente piagendo, domandò misericordia e perdonanza del grande fallo che commesso avea." Jacopo Passavanti, *Lo Specchio della vera penitenza*, in *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, ed. Arrigo Levasti (Milan: Rizzoli Editori, 1935), 703 (unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine).

24 "A queste parole la immagine si levò in piede, e posto il Figliuolo in sull'altare, si gittò ginocchione davanti a lui, e disse: 'Dolcissimo Figliuol mio, io ti priego che per lo mio amore tue perdoni a questo cavaliere contrito il suo peccato.' " Ibid., 704.

25 On this theme more broadly, see Bacci, "*Pro remedio animae*", 14–19.

26 An introduction to the proceedings of the Second Council of Nicea (or the Seventh Ecumenical Council) can be found discussed by Daniel J. Sahas, introduction to *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

images were justified in part for their ability to inspire pity in the viewer. The interlocutors recall how the Council heard the description of an image of the martyrdom of St. Euphemia, after which "many fathers of the Sinod compuncted themselves having only heard the description of this painted story, and cried their sins."[27] Here, illustrating how compunction could be provoked by contemplation of mental as well as painted imagery, the tears of compunction arise from the awareness of one's own unworthiness next to the holiness of a Saint.

As in Comanini's text, many Renaissance writers discuss religious compunction and art with respect to the justification of religious images, albeit often fleetingly. To take one further example, the dialogue on art by the Florentine writer, Raffaello Borghini, published in 1584, entitled *Il Riposo* (named after the villa at which the dialogue takes place), rehearses common justifications for religious images derived from Gregory the Great. At an early moment in the dialogue, the interlocutors defend religious images on the grounds that through teaching the stories of the Bible to the illiterate, images can teach what should rightly be adored and what should not be adored.[28] For an image to be edifying in this way, one of the interlocutors argues, the artist "must observe in their painting . . . honesty, reverence and devotion; such that the viewers . . . are compuncted with penitence by looking at the work . . . [rather than] being moved to lasciviousness."[29] Here, the painting's ability to inspire compunction

27 "si come ancora Padri di quella Sinodo si compunsero nell'udir leggere il solo racconto di questa dipinta istoria e piansero i loro peccati." Gregorio Comanini, *Il Figino overo del fine della pittura*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: G. Laterza, 1962), 3: 311. My translation was made in consultation with Gregorio Comanini, *The Figino, or, On the Purpose of Painting: Art Theory in the Late Renaissance* trans. Ann Doyle-Anderson and Giancarlo Maiorino (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). The original description of the image can be found in English in Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 129–131.

28 "disse San Gregorio, altro è adorare le pitture, altro per l'historia delle pitture quello che sia da adorare imprendere; percioché la pittura a gli idioti riguardanti quello mostra, che la scrittura a gli studiosi delle sacre carte insegna." Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo di Raffaello Borghini, in cui della pittura, e della scultura si favella . . .* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1584), 77. Citations from *Il Riposo* refer to the first edition, though an e-book produced by Paola Barocchi and made available at http://www.memofonte.it/ has also been consulted; my translations have also been prepared in consultation with the translation in Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, trans. Lloyd H. Ellis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

29 "che sempre osservar deono nelle lor pitture, è l'onestà, la riverenza e la divozione; acciò che i riguardanti in cambio di compugnersi a penitenza nel rimirare quelle, più tosto non si commuovano a lascivia." Ibid., 78.

determines the success of the religious painting and hence becomes a concern for the painter and the proper practice of their their art. Compunction is diametrically opposed to the sins of worldly pleasures (lasciviousness), and it is the painter's responsibility to paint with a pious intention (observing "honesty, reverence and devotion") so as to inspire devotion in viewers. This both illustrates how compunction is fundamentally concerned with relinquishing sensual appetites, and also how the compunctive efficacy of a work of art was not only due to the grace of God (as was the case in the story described by Passavanti), but also to the skill and piety of the painter.

One painting that might have inspired compunction in viewers, by Borghini's standard, is the painting of *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* by Allesandro Allori found in the church of Santo Spirito in Florence (Figure 3).[30]

This painting is singled out for praise in Borghini's dialogue by one of the interlocutors who notes that the figure of the adulteress is "beyond being well ornamented, she is arranged in that way that shows the shame of her error," and, elsewhere in the dialogue the figure is described as demonstrating the "shame and penitence" of her sin.[31] The artist has thus created a figure who, as she turns away from lasciviousness, expresses the guilt and shame that were associated with religious compunction. Other passages in sixteenth-century literature suggest that the shame seen on the adulteress may have encouraged the feeling of culpability in viewers. This process of what may be called "empathetic compunction" is illustrated in the second edition of Giorgio Vasari's *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori* (*Lives of the Artists*), published in 1568, in which Vasari describes one of Titian's late paintings of the *Penitent Mary Magdalen* (Figure 4).[32]

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30 See Ellis in the introduction to Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 30, where it is noted that this is one of the few paintings that receives only praise in the dialogue. The painting, commissioned for the Cini family altar, is discussed by Simona Lecchini Giovannoni, *Alessandro Allori* (Turin: Umberto Allemandi & C., 1991), 240–241.

31 "e particolarmente mi piace la femina colta in fallo, la quale oltre all'essere benissimo ornata, è acconcia in tal atto che dimostra vergogna del suo errore." Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 203. "e particolarmente cotesta femina, che dimostra vergogna e pentimento del fallo commesso". Ibid., 114.

32 On Titian's many paintings of the penitent Magdalene, see Harold E. Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian: Complete Edition. 1. The Religious Paintings* (Phaidon: London, 1969), 143–151; the Capodimonte version is most likely a workshop production, but it shows the tears very clearly.

FIGURE 3 *Allesandro Allori*, Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery (*1577*). *Santo Spirito, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

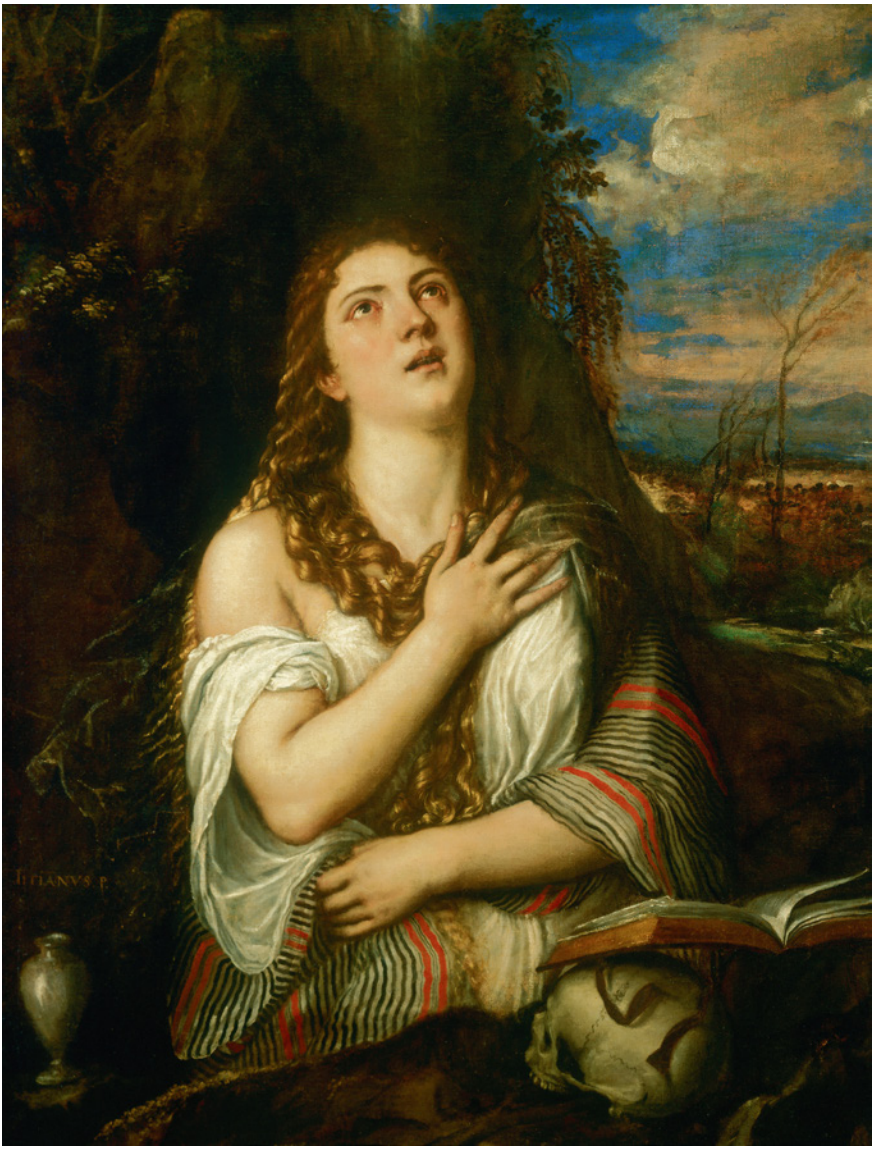

FIGURE 4 *Titian*, Penitent Mary Magdalen (*c. 1550*). *Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA/MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

He writes that she

> shows compunction in the flushing of her eyes, and in the tears of sadness for her sins, such that this picture greatly moves whoever looks at it, and even if she is beautiful, she does not move [the viewer] to lust, but to pity.[33]

In Vasari's description there is a polarity between lust and compunction: the lust of the viewer is transformed into pity and compunction by seeing the Magdalene's pain and penitence, and the love of pleasure is transformed into the love of God.[34] The transformation from lustfulness to holiness has been posited as an important feature of Counter-Reformation spirituality, and accordingly art-historical attention has recently been given to paintings of Mary Magdalene, examining how viewers might have activated the devotional themes in paintings of her.[35] But this passage by Vasari, in which he appears to proactively respond to the objection that Titian's painting might encourage lust, also makes apparent how questions of beauty and sensuous appeal occupied a contested role in spiritual experiences of compunction. It may be that images which first seduced the viewers' carnal thoughts could potently inspire

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33 "mentre ella alzando la testa con gl'occhi fissi al cielo, mostra compunzione nel rossore degl'occhi, e nelle lachrime dogliezza de' peccati. Onde muove questa pittura, chiunche la guarda, estremamente. E che è piu, ancorche sia bellissima, non muove a lascivia, ma a comiserazione." Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori* (Florence: Giunti, 1568) 3: 816. Several modern editions of Vasari have been consulted in the course of research, especially the editions by Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi, and Gaetano Milanesi; the translations by Gaston Du C. DeVere and George Bull have also been consulted in the preparation of my own translations (full details on editions and translations in the bibliography). Citations from the text of Vasari's *Vite* refer to the 1568 Giunti edition unless it is otherwise stated that the Torrentiana is being cited. Later, the poet Giambattista Marino would describe this (or a similar) painting by Titian, evoking again the language of the pain of compunction (*pentita, piagne, colpe*, etc.) and also that of love (*amata, amante, amor*, etc.); see James V. Mirollo, *The Poet of the Marvelous: Giambattista Marino* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 286–293.

34 On expressions of grief in Renaissance art, see Moshe Barasch, "The Crying Face," in *Imago Homonis. Studies in the Language of Art* (Vienna: IRSA, 1991).

35 See, for instance, Pamela Jones, "The Power of Images: Paintings and Viewers in Caravaggio's Italy," Thomas Worcester, "Trent and Beyond: Arts of Transformation," and Franco Mormando, "Teaching the Faithful to Fly: Mary Magdalene and Peter in Baroque Italy," all in Franco Mormando, ed., *Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio & the Baroque Image* (Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 1999).

compunction since these images recalled viewers to their base appetites before reminding them to shun these desires.[36] By viewing Titian's Magdalene pictures within the framework of spiritual compunction we are made aware that compunction, even though it renounces earthly preoccupations, cannot really exist without being preceded by them and transforming them into a passionate love of God. Though scholars have traditionally wrestled with the mixed sexuality and spirituality of the image, the devotional experience of compunction helps to make sense of images in which sexuality, carnal appetites, guilt and the passionate love of Christ are entirely appropriate together.[37]

The pain of compunction is a purgative experience during which God cleanses the soul of sin.[38] For example, the penitence of the Magdalene was described as simultaneously painful yet renewing in the sense that through her grief, God purged sin from her soul. In a work of Gregory the Great, for instance, which is discussed and quoted in Passavanti's *Specchio della vera penitenza*, Gregory argues that the Magdalene's penitence is efficacious for being infused with love. Gregory, in Passavanti's text, asks rhetorically, "what would we call love, if not a fire? . . . So much more, therefore, is the tarnish of sin consumed, the more strongly the heart burns with love."[39] Because her penitence is full of love, it is able to burn sin away and purge her soul. The tears of compunction were a standard trope for demonstrating the "tarnish of sin" being purged from the soul and were a leitmotif of medieval spiritual literature. Gregory the Great writes that once "the mind . . . pierces itself with the sword

36 A similar argument is suggested by Bernard Aikema, "Titian's Mary Magdalen in the Palazzo Pitti: An Ambiguous Painting and Its Critics," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994), 52–53.

37 In addition to Aikema, "Titian's Mary Magdalen," recent discussions include Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, "Vittoria Colonna and Titian's Pitti 'Magdalen'," *Woman's Art Journal* 24, no. 1 (2003).

38 Leclerq, *Love of Learning*, 30, writes that the "ultimate role of compunction is to bring the soul a longing for Heaven . . . tears of love always accompany those of penitence; but more and more these are dominated by tears of joy." See also Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 218: "Gregory may have believed, as others did, that tears of compunction release excessive humours, helping the soul regain balance and self-control."

39 "Che diremo noi che sia l'amore, se non un fuoco? . . . Tanto, dunque, più si consuma la ruggine del peccato, quanto il cuore arde di maggiore amore." Passavanti, *Specchio della vera penitenza*, 706. Similar sentiments concerning Mary Magdalene are rehearsed in Pietro Bembo's *Book of the Courtier*, in which the Saint is said to be forgiven of her sins for her great love; see Debby, "Vittoria Colonna and Titian," 31. On the Magdalene as an examplar for penitence, see K. Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), chapter 7.

of compunction, . . . [it] can do nothing but weep and by its tears, wash away its stains."[40] Crying, hence, expelled sin from the soul whilst it discharged bodily fluid. A book by Brunoro Pistorozzi, *Virtu di lagrime* (The virtue of tears), demonstrates that the tears of compunction were still a living convention in sixteenth-century Italy.[41] Pistorozzi writes that tears are the realization of misery and the beginning of the path to salvation. True misery exists in those who are "for the hardness of their heart deprived of the tears of compunction," since they will therefore not find salvation.[42]

Titian's painting of the Magdalene, with its crystalline tears noted by Vasari, illustrates the pictorial expression of this convention.[43] The tears of compunction likewise recur frequently in Renaissance literature on art, even in the writings of authors who were not singularly concerned with theological questions. For example, in the nearly encyclopedic treatise on painting published in 1584 by Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, there is a list of the kinds of images that could produce the guilt and shame of compunction. Lomazzo writes that

> Many wicked people and sinners who had already forgotten God, having seen the Holy image of Christ flagellated . . . have made great penitence, returning in themselves and spreading rivers of bitter tears . . . many proud and lustful people, seeing the image of Our Lady, have become

40 Gregory the Great, *Homilaiae in Ezechielem* 2.2.1, translation in Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism: The Teaching of ss. Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, 2nd ed. (London: Constable, 1927), 71. "Saepe autem per omnipotentis Domini gratiam in ejus eloquio quaedam intelliguntur melius cum sermo Dei secretius legitur, atque animus, culparum suarum conscius, dum recognoscit, quod audierit, doloris se jaculo percutit, et compunctionis gladio transfigit, ut nihil ei nisi flere libeat, et fluentis fletuum maculas lavare." Gregory the Great, *Homilaiae in Ezechielem* 2.2.1 (Migne, *PL* 076.0949).

41 Brunoro Pistorozzi, *Virtu di lagrime* (Florence, 1594). Nagy, *Le don des larmes au Moyen Âge*, discusses changes to the meanings of tears, arguing that they eventually became simply signs of piety rather than evidence of grace.

42 "per la durezza del cuore privo di lagrime di compunzione, ne nasce che è irremediabile la morte eterna." Pistorozzi, *Virtu di lagrime*, 14v.

43 The depiction of tears in art is more frequently discussed with respect to northern European art. On the phenomenon of tears in art and crying in response to a painting, see James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2001), particularly chapter 9 on compunction. See also Federica Veratelli, "Lacrime dipinte, lacrime reali. Rappresentare il dolore nel Quattrocento: modello fiammingo, ricezione italiana," *Storia dell'Arte* n.s. 13/14 (2006).

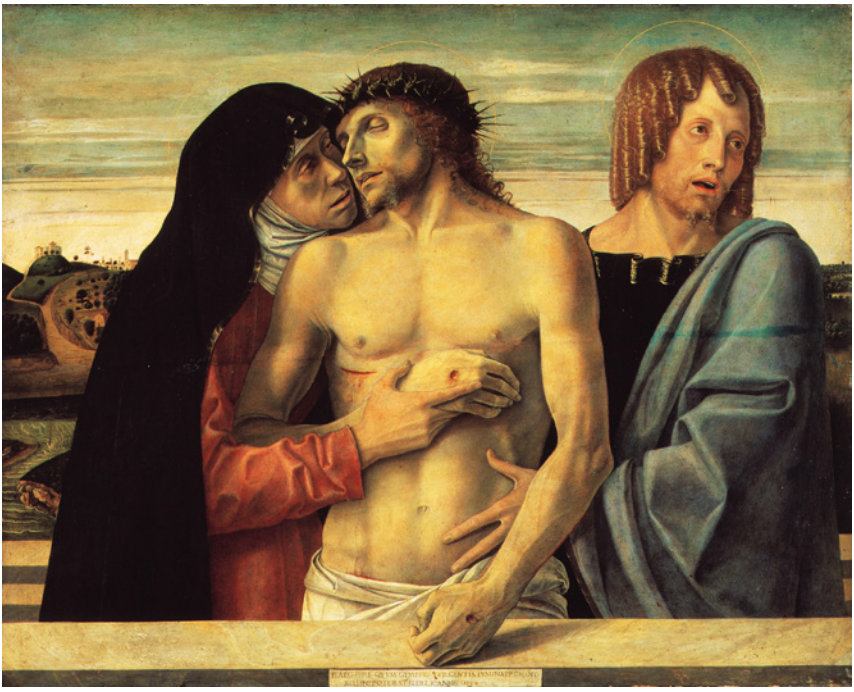

FIGURE 5 *Giovanni Bellini*, Pietà (*c. 1467–71*). *Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy.* PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

> humble and chaste; many impenitent people seeing a portrait of the Magdalene . . . have left the pleasures of cities . . .[44]

Giovanni Bellini's *Pietà*, though earlier than Lomazzo's treatise, is an example of the kind of work about which Lomazzo may have been thinking (Figure 5).

In this image, the presence of and emphasis given to tears suggests that it may have provoked compunction in its viewers: it is not hard to imagine that the tears of the Virgin, articulated with crystal-like precision, may have induced the tears of viewers, not only in empathy for the sadness of Mary, but

44 "Percioche molti scelerati, & peccatori scordatisi gia di dio, vedendo la santissima imagine di Christo flagellato . . . ritornando in se stess, & spargendo da gl'occhi fiumi d'amare lagrime hanno fatto asprissima penitenza . . . molti superbi, & lussuriosi vedendo l'imagine di nostra Donna, hanno seguito l'humilità & castità; molti impenitenti, vendeno il ritratto Maddalena, di santa Maria Egittiaca, & altri santi hanno lasciato le delitie de le città & seguito l'asprezza de la solitudine . . ." Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura* (Milan, 1584), 5.

also in contemplation of the fact that Christ had died for their sins. A *cartellino* depicted at the bottom of the painting on the front of Christ's sarcophagus makes this point by declaring that "when these swelling eyes evoke groans this [very] work of Giovanni Bellini could shed tears."[45] By stating that the painting itself might begin to shed tears if it could successfully inspire viewers to feel compunction, the inscription suggests that its power approaches that of a living being when it persuades viewers to experience an emotion.

The presence of compunction in this sampling of writers is not surprising: since these images served religious purposes, it makes sense that the images should conjure the recollection of medieval spiritual language. However, as can already be faintly perceived in the selection above, these texts describe a relationship between compunction and visual art that is not merely a recitation of medieval tropes but rather a renewal and reworking of these themes in light of new discourses on art. In fact, there is a complex interaction between compunction and the work of art that emerges in Renaissance writings which, as noted in the introduction, articulated the meanings and methods of the newly emerged art of naturalistic painting and sculpture. In the medieval tale told by Passavanti, the artist who created the work was not a central actor in the story; however, in other examples explored above, the artist's agency plays a fundamental role, and though these later writings do not involve miracles per se, the drama of conversion is still preserved according to the medieval conventions of compunction. To demonstrate how compunction is a theme that is entwined with many central issues in Renaissance literature on art, and to illustrate how looking at the literature on art through the lens of spiritual themes can enhance our understanding of Renaissance art, the remainder of this chapter focuses on one particularly rich religious, literary and artistic context in sixteenth-century Florence: the cult of the Annunciation at the church of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence. Here, a miracle-working image, with features believed not to have been made by human hand, became a focal point for reflections on art and provoked contemplations more broadly on the nature of artistic ability and the role of images in religious experiences.

45 "HAEC FERE QVVM GEMITVS TVRGENTIA LVMINA PROMANT BELLINI POTERAT FLERE IOANNIS OPVS." Giles Robertson, *Giovanni Bellini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 54–55. Robertson notes the similarity between this couplet and the work of Propertius. More recently the *cartellino* is discussed by Keith Christiansen, "Giovanni Bellini and the Practice of Devotional Painting," in *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion*, ed. Ronda Kasl (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2004), 36.

Compunction and Popular Devotion at the Santissima Annunziata in Florence

The cult and devotional context around the miracle-working image of the Annunciation at the Santissima Annunziata in Florence is an appropriate object of study for this introductory chapter since in the late sixteenth century a unique book, merging art theory and spiritual literature, was written about this image by the Florentine author Francesco Bocchi (Figure 6).

In recent years, Bocchi has become one of the more studied writers of literature on art from the sixteenth century.[46] A scholar and writer who lived primarily by educating the sons of noblemen, he also wrote many speeches, historical works and various treatises, amongst which are a group of texts on visual art. Bocchi's reputation today rests largely upon these artistic writings and his guidebook to Florence, *Le Bellezze della città di Fiorenza*.[47] A treatise in praise of Donatello's sculpture of St. George at Orsanmichele in Florence has likewise been the subject of several studies, and a discourse in praise of Andrea del Sarto has been noted amongst his other writing on art.[48] Despite this scholarly interest, his treatise on the miraculous painting of the Annunciation in Santissima Annunziata in Florence, *Sopra l'imagine miracolosa della Santissima Nunziata di Firenze*, has until relatively recently remained little studied, though it is a work of maturity.[49] Examining the intellectual influences and structure of the book within context of the author's other writings, Gerald Schröder's study of Bocchi is one of the few texts to analyze the book in depth.[50] This chapter will

46 On Francesco Bocchi's life (1548–1613/1618) see Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma* (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960–1962), 3: 408–409 and Silvana Menchi, "Francesco Bocchi," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–). Bocchi's writings have recently been studied by Gerald Schröder, *Der kluge Blick: Studie zu den kunsttheoretischen Reflexionen Francesco Bocchis* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2003).

47 Francesco Bocchi, *Le Bellezze della città di Fiorenza* (Florence, 1591).

48 Francesco Bocchi, *Eccellenza della statua del San Giorgio di Donatello*, in *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: G. Laterza, 1962), vol. 3. The unpublished treatise on Sarto is published in Robert Williams, "A treatise by Francesco Bocchi in praise of Andrea del Sarto," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989). A more comprehensive overview of Bocchi's art-related writings can be found in Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, chapter 4.

49 Francesco Bocchi, *Sopra l'imagine miracolosa della Santissima Nunziata di Firenze* (Florence, 1592).

50 See Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, sections 4.3–4.3.4; it has also been treated recently by Sara F. Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli della SS. Annunziata," *Word & Image*

FIGURE 6 *Anonymous Florentine Artist* (*Jacopo di Cione?*), The Annunciation of the Virgin (*traditionally dated to 1252, now believed to be from the 14th century*). *ss. Annunziata, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

investigate how many of the themes of Bocchi's book are unified when perceived through the lens of compunction, and how Bocchi's interrogation of the miraculous image raises questions about the artist's role in provoking spiritual experiences through art.

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25 (2009), 272–273, and by Zygmunt Waźbiński, "Il modus semplice: Un dibattito sull'ars sacra fiorentina intorno al 1600," in *Studi su Raffaello: Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi*, ed. Sambuco Michaela Hamoud and Maria Letizia Strocchi (Urbino: Quattroventi, 1987). The book was reprinted in the nineteenth century: Francesco Bocchi, *Della imagine miracolosa della ss. Nunziata* (Florence, 1852) and also in part in Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols. (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1973). All citations refer to the first edition.

The obscurity of Bocchi's text is surprising given that it is one of the few book-length texts from this period that treats a single work of art.[51] Bocchi himself describes the book simply as one in which "nothing else is treated, if not of the praise that pertains to this miraculous Madonna," and dedicates the text to Baccio Aldobrandini, who he calls "Signor, & padron mio," a man whose soul is "always alighted in devout and praiseworthy works."[52] In the text, Bocchi recounts the miraculous creation of the face of the Virgin said to have been painted by the hand of God, meditates on the beauty and religious efficacy of the face and the work as a whole, and includes some miracle stories associated with the painting. Although this book was produced at the end of the period that is the object of this study, it is useful nonetheless to begin here, since Bocchi's writings make apparent the religious currents that are strong though less visible in earlier artistic literature.

Bocchi's book reveals the threefold relationship between the language of religious compunction, the experience of art, and the recently emerged discourse on art. While it is true that Bocchi evokes classical and pagan authorities on art in this book (and likewise throughout his other writings on art), in his treatise on the miraculous image of the Annunciation these classical writings are conjured to articulate a religious experience. The rich interplay between classical and Christian themes suggests that the rhetorical language used to describe art cannot be so easily explained as the revival of classical aesthetic terminology. Likewise, these classical sources cannot simply be replaced with medieval ones, and Bocchi's rhetoric cannot merely be described as the reiteration of medieval tropes. Rather, the weaving of Christian and classical values suggests that new aesthetic experiences are being described, and that this experience is tightly wedded to spirituality.

The complexity of the text is compounded by the uniqueness of its subject: the painting was much older than most art objects subject to extensive literary scrutiny during the Renaissance and, moreover, as an image purportedly

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51 Schlosser Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, 391, wrote that Bocchi's treatise on St. George was the first text to deal exclusively with a work of art that was already antique at the time that the text was written.

52 "l'animo suo sempre acceso in opere divote, & lodevoli"; "dove non si tratta di altro, se non di lode, che à questa Madonna miracolosa appartiene." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, in the dedicatory pages. Matthews-Grieco has identified Aldobrandini as "a cousin of the newly elected Pope Clement VIII (former Cardinal Ippolito Aldobrandini, born in 1535) . . . appointed Senator by Grand Duke Ferdinand I in 1592," see Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli," 287n7. Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 216n13, notes that a letter in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, written to Elena Morelli, 29 September 1584, may shed light on Bocchi's inspiration for this book.

painted in part by God, it had qualities that were naturally not attributed to most images. It is therefore all the more fascinating that Bocchi should employ the same terms he used to theorize the art of Donatello, Andrea del Sarto and others in his book on the miracle-working image. Before turning to the text, however, to better comprehend the spiritual themes in Bocchi's text it will help to elucidate the cult and legend surrounding the image at the Santissima Annunziata more generally.

The miracle-working image of the Annunciation treated by Bocchi is a fresco by an unknown painter, probably from the mid-fourteenth century, located in the church of the Santissima Annunziata, the church of the Servites in Florence. The fresco depicts Gabriel on the left-hand side of the painting, and the Virgin seated on the right, her hands folded in her lap, gazing toward the Holy Spirit being sent to her from God the Father in the top left-hand side of the painting. The actual date of the painting and the origins of the cult surrounding it are obscure: from the fifteenth century the painting is dated to 1252 in Servite literature, though art-historical literature from the sixteenth century to the present day places it in the fourteenth century, and it is now believed to have been painted by Jacopo di Cione.[53] The church of the Annunziata, originally called Santa Maria di Cafaggio, was founded on 25 March 1250, then just outside of the city walls, not long before the traditional date ascribed to the painting.[54] It is possible that there was an image of the annunciation in the church from sometime in the thirteenth century, and the presence of ex-votos at the altar of the Annunciation, suggesting some cult activity, are documented from the fourteenth century.[55] The date of the image is in part so difficult to ascertain since, in addition to the ex-votos that have been amassed

53 The origins of the cult have been investigated by Megan Holmes, "The Elusive Origins of the Cult of the Annunciation in Florence," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004). This article includes further bibliography on the Servites and art-historical literature, which has been drawn upon in this chapter. Most recently on the question of origins, see Maria Husabø Oen, "The Origins of a Miraculous Image: Notes on the Annunciation Fresco in SS. Annunziata in Florence," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 80 (2011): 1–22. See also Ottavio Andreucci, *Il Fiorentino istruito nella chiesa della Nunziata di Firenze* (Florence, M. Cellini e c., 1857), 76–80. The imagery of the painting is treated in depth by Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, section 4.3.2.

54 See Eugenio Casalini, *Una icona di famiglia: Nuovi contributi di storia d'arte sulla ss. Annunziata di Firenze* (Florence: Convento SS. Annunziata, 1998), 20–23.

55 Holmes dates the image to c. 1340, suggesting that afterward it became responsive to devotee suplication; see "Elusive Origins," 110–113. On the probable presence of the image see Casalini, *Una icona di famiglia*, 20–21.

before the image and the jeweled dressings that have ornamented the surface of the painting and, to a certain extent, obscured it, the painting has also been retouched and repainted.[56] Whatever the true origin and date of the painting, it has been the focus of intense devotion from at least the fourteenth century and onward to the present day.

The legends describing the creation of the image celebrate it as an "acheiropoieton" (or "acheropita"), an image not made by hand (or, an image "non-manufactum"), similar to Veronica's veil and other contact relics of Christ.[57] The multiple tales recounting the miraculous apparition of the image, each with minor variations, will be discussed in a later chapter; most include the story of a painter of pious habit who prays to paint an image worthy of the Virgin, later finding that the Virgin's face has been miraculously completed in his absence.[58] There were several miracle-working images in Florence and Italy contemporary to the Annunziata image, though the Annunziata fresco is notable for, according to legend, having in part been painted by God, and in

56 On the painting's restorations see Casalini, *Una icona di famiglia*, 23–24. On the votive figures offered to the painting during the Renaissance, see Andreucci, *Il fiorentino istruito*, 86–87. On the jewels, see Holmes, "The Elusive Origins," 104–105 and on the ex-votos see ibid., 108–110. A manuscript from 1650 documenting several ex-votos and also describing the kinds of ex-votos given to the image (in wax, on paper, painted panels, statues, etc.) is transcribed in Iginia Dina, "Ex-voto d'argento all'Annunziata nel 1650: Manoscritto del P. Ferdinando Mancini, O.S.M.," in *La ss. Annunziata di Firenze: Studi e documenti sulla chiesa e il convento*, ed. Eugenio M. Casalini (Florence: Convento della SS. Annunziata, 1978).

57 As noted by Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 113. More generally on miracle-working images in Florence, see Megan Holmes, "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence," *Art History* 34 (2011); David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). On the origins of these images see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, chapter 4; Bacci, *Pro remedio animae*, chapter 1. The findings of two new books have appeared too recently to be incorporated into this study: Holmes, *The Miraculous Image*, and Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). On the latter book, see Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, "Notes from the Field: Anthropomorphism: Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser," in *The Art Bulletin* 94 (2012): 22–24.

58 These elements can be found in the earliest written account of the painting's origins, a dialogue written by the Servite Paolo Attavanti, entitled *Dialogus de origine ordinis servorum ad Petrum Cosmae*, usually dated to 1465. The text is preserved in a manuscript in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence, and is discussed by Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 97–99. See chapter 4 of this study on the origin legends of this image.

part painted by man.[59] As Hans Belting has argued, images "non-manufactum" were treated as a real presence of the person figured: the essence of the Virgin Mary, for instance, was embodied in the painting as made evident by the miracles she performed.[60] The images were accordingly given the respect of real people: they had quasi-biographical texts written about them, they were dressed in clothing, they received gifts, they were the focus of processions, and they could see and respond to what occurred around them. Richard Trexler has argued that, in Renaissance Florence, in practice these images acquired power from the devotion given to them, which was materially present in the votive offerings that surrounded them.[61]

Beyond the qualities that distinguished it as a miracle-working image, the patterns of devotion surrounding the Annunziata image are consistent with many aspects of spirituality in late medieval and Renaissance Italy. Most notably, the painting is located within a mendicant church and thus, to unpack Bocchi's language, it is useful to consider the text and the image in relationship to various aspects of mendicant spirituality. The order of Servites originated in Florence between 1233 and 1241–42, not long before the traditional date given to the painting,[62] and corresponding with the flowering of mendicant spirituality in the thirteenth century and the spread of urban spiritual movements that empowered lay individuals to work toward their own salvation.[63]

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59 Some typical features of the legends accompanying miracle-working images are discussed by Richard C. Trexler, "Being and Non-Being: Parameters of the Miraculous in the Traditional Religious Image," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004), 16. Also see Richard C. Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 19 (1972).

60 See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, chapter 4.

61 See Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 23.

62 See Andreucci, *Il fiorentino istruito*, 29, and Franco Andrea Dal Pino, *I frati Servi di S. Maria: Dalle origini all approvatione* (*1233 ca.–1304*), (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1972), xi. See also *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s. v. "Servites."

63 For an overview of the growth of the mendicant orders see Richard William Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), chapter 6; C.H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London: Longman, 1994); Rosalind Brook, *The Coming of the Friars* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1975). On the theological innovations of the twelfth century that supported the increased focus on individual spirituality, see Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. and trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, and intro. Etienne Gilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 283–4. On the growth of the mendicant orders in Florence in particular see Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*,

The seven Florentine merchant founders of the order are themselves typical of this self-directed piety, for they not only took it upon themselves to withdraw from public life, but also beforehand they participated in a lay devotional society: a *laudesi* company (a group that performed devotion through song) dedicated to the Virgin Mary in the church of Santa Reparata.[64] As has been extensively discussed in scholarly literature, visual art was integral to the mendicant orders' project of civilizing urban populations, calling upon them to repent and become directly involved in their spiritual development.[65]

Mendicant Friars encouraged spiritual activity through sermons and direct involvement in lay religious, confraternal associations; the following broad overview of these activities highlights some themes that will later be seen in Bocchi's text. In Florence in the High Middle Ages and Renaissance, two of the most prevalent forms of devotional activity were the lay associations of penitential confraternities, known as *disciplinati* companies, and

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part 2; Blake Wilson, *Music and Merchants: The Laudesi Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), chapter 1.

64 See Andreucci, *Il Fiorentino istruito*, 29.

65 The bibliography on the relationship between the development of the arts and the mendicant orders is lengthy. The relationship was originally discussed by Henry Thode, *Saint François d'Assise et les origines de l'art de la Renaissance en Italie*, trans. Gaston Lefèvre, 2 vols. (Paris: Librarie Renouard, H. Laurens, 1909); originally published as *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: G. Grote, 1885). A brief article by Louise Bourdua reviews recent contributions regarding mendicant patronage of art; see "13th–14th Century Italian Mendicant Orders and Art," in *Economia e Arte secc. XIII–XVIII: Atti della trentatreesima settimana di studi istituto internazionale di storica economica*, ed. S. Cavaciocchi (Florence: Le Monnier, 2002), see 474n10 for bibliography. The relationship between Passion imagery and the Franciscans is discussed by Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy: Narrative Painting, Franciscan Ideologies, and the Levant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and on 182n19 a useful bibliography of recent contributions. A useful discussion of the context in which images were viewed in mendicant churches can be found in Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Beverley Jackson (London: Allen Lane, 1992), part 1, chapter 2. Some recent contributions on mendicant spirituality and art include: Louise Bourdua, *The Franciscans and Art Patronage in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); William Cook, ed., *The Art of the Franciscan Order in Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Louise Bourdua and Anne Dunlop, eds., *Art and the Augustinian Orders in Early Renaissance Italy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Rona Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict: Saint Francis and Giotto's Bardi Chapel* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988); Rona Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice: Bellini, Titian, and the Franciscans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

laudesi companies.[66] Both groups were generally involved with assisting at Mass, participation in some form of devotional practice and ritual, and listening to sermons.[67] The laudesi groups were formed by groups of lay individuals to sing devotional laude usually to the Virgin Mary and other Saints, and met (often in a mendicant church) every weeknight, in addition to participating in processions and other celebrations.[68] One of the earliest references to a Florentine laudesi company is associated with the Servite church, the Societas beatae Mariae Virginis, founded in 1264 by St. Filippo Benizi, who, according to legend, was inspired to join the Servites by the painting of the Annunciation at the Annunziata.[69] Usually the focus of the musical performance was an image of the Madonna, as was the case with the laudesi company at Orsanmichele, where members would sing before the miracle-working image of the Madonna.[70] Candles were lit before the image, and on certain feast days, some company statutes reveal that all members of the congregation held lit candles.[71] The mass of flickering lights enveloping an image accompanied by voices raised in harmony must have contributed substantially to the emotional impact of these paintings, which were often only unveiled on important occasions (as was the case with the Annuziata image, as will be discussed below).[72] The laudesi company San Bastiano had its home at the church of the Annunziata, where it had an oratory for *feriale* laude singing (on weekdays) on the east side of the tribune in the renovated and expanded church built after 1450.[73] The Renaissance activity of the confraternity was therefore not

66 John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 32; Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 29.

67 See Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, chapter 2; Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 33.

68 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 31; On Marian confraternal devotion, see Gilles Gérard Meersseman, *Ordo fraternitatis: confraternite e pietà dei laici nel Medioevo*, in collaboration with Gian Piero Pacini (Rome: Herder editrice e libreria, 1977), 2: 922–1004.

69 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 43, 29; Meersseman, *Ordo fraternitatis*, 2: 955–6, 976–7. On St. Filippo Benizi and the inspiration to join the Servites, see Holmes, "The Elusive Origins," 103.

70 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 61–62. See also the overview of this confraternity's activities in Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, chapter 6.

71 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 62.

72 Ibid., 61. On preserving the power of a miracle-working image by limiting its exposure, see Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 17. On lighting pilgrim shrines and Orsanmichele and the SS. Annunziata in particular, see Paul Davies, "The Lighting of Pilgrim Shrines in Renaissance Italy" in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Erik Thunø and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004), 70.

73 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 201.

directly in front of the Annunciation fresco; however, the currents of Marian devotion expressed in the laudesi company rituals shed light on the devotional context of the Annuziata painting. For instance, the sentiments of awe and joy that are expressed in laude singing are perhaps recalled when Bocchi writes about the impressive spectacle of the unveiling of the image. He notes how pilgrims make

> ardent sighs . . . ask mercy, and place into oblivion their condition . . . as though lifted by a divine vigor . . . When the voice is let out that the holy face must be uncovered, what effect is born within the people, what yearning, what ardor?[74]

The impression Bocchi creates of ecstatic devotion is echoed in the joyful tones of the laude, which were a means of celebrating God's goodness and expressing desires for Mary's intercession and mercy. Hence, the mendicant project of engaging the public in spiritual life was facilitated through the potent combination of ritual, song, and the spectacle of the painted image.[75]

The emphasis on awe and joy in God, as well as the merciful character of Marian devotion, distinguished laudesi companies from their disciplinati counterparts, which focused on penitence and renouncing the material world.[76] This more Christocentric form of devotion sought to participate in the suffering of Christ by practicing penitential exercises, such as self-flagellation.[77] As described above, the notion of compunction embodied both the penitential dimensions of spirituality and its joyful elements, and the confraternal devotional activity at the church of the SS. Annunziata is notable for inhabiting both of these spiritual gestures. On the one hand, the Marian focus of the church and the Servite order, the activity of the laudesi company of San Bastiano, as well as the praises offered in Bocchi's book, as will be seen, all expressed the joy of spiritual encounter. However, the church of the Annunziata was also a locus of penitential activity. For instance, within the company of San Bastiano

74 "bagnato di lagrime, con ardenti sospiri chiede mercè il popolo, che è presente, & posta in oblio sua condizione, disposti i terreni pensieri, come pare da vigor divino sollevato . . . Quando fuori esce la voce, che si dee scoprire questo santissimo volto, che affetto nasce nella gente, che brama, che ardore?" Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 53.

75 See Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 21.

76 See Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, chapter 4 and John Henderson, "Penitence and the Laity in Fifteenth-Century Florence," in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

77 Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 113–114, and 122–125.

there was an emphasis on confession following the laudesi services, leading Blake Wilson to describe the company as bearing the "strong stamp of Marian devotion infused with authoritarian tone and penitential cast."[78] In fact, by 1520 the company had become a disciplinati company, and even before this, the company practiced the recitation of penitential psalms, suggesting the commingling of penitence with joy in the activities of the company.[79] Disciplinati companies grew throughout the fifteenth century as laudesi companies waned in popularity.[80] Hence the spiritual themes of penitence and joy converged around the church of the SS. Annunziata in the centuries leading to Bocchi's treatise.

The cult of the Annunziata image may not be unique in this regard: Marian devotion was characterized in part by its ability to bind to itself the needs of various and numerous local groups as well as diverse devotional attitudes.[81] As the figure of absolute mercy (in contradistinction to Christ's judgment), and also as a holy figure for whom there were no bodily relics that could be claimed by any one group of people, she was everyone's saint and for this reason was often adopted as the patron for many medieval towns and Renaissance cities.[82] Mary was at once a very human figure to whom the faithful could appeal directly, as well as a saint who was attributed such strength that she at times seemed in danger of supplanting Christ. The desire for a presence of the Virgin, to which the miraculous images responded, may in part have stemmed from her absence in sacramental rituals: unlike Christ who was present at every mass, there was no ritual to make the Virgin present in quotidian life.[83]

The image of the Annunciation at the Annunziata consequently was also a locus of civic pride and identity for Florentines and was claimed in the

78 Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 106.

79 Ibid., 106; see also Ronald F.E. Weisseman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 58.

80 See Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 41.

81 See Richard Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 89.

82 On the merciful nature of Mary, see Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Marian Devotion in the Western Church," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* ed. Jill Raitt (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 400–404. On the veneration of Mary in the sixteenth century, see Massimo Petrocchi, *Storia della spiritualità italiana II: Il cinquecento e il seicento* (Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1978), chapter 7.

83 This suggestion is made by Marlène Albert-Llorca, *Les Vierges miraculeuses: légendes et rituels* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 34.

fifteenth century as a focus of Medici devotion.[84] The tabernacle built around the image, completed in 1448, was designed and completed by Michelozzo under commission by Piero de Medici who was likewise its principle patron.[85] In addition to being sequestered behind the tabernacle, the fresco was also veiled, as were other miracle-working images around Florence, notably the Madonna at Orsanmichele and the Madonna of Impruneta, in a town near Florence.[86] The veil and Michelozzo's *tempietto* would have had the effect of preserving the sanctity of the space around the Virgin by setting it apart from the rest of the church, as well as claiming the space for its patrons.

This initial sketch of the devotional activity at the Santissima Annunziata, though cursory and broad, will help unpack the layers of meaning embedded within Bocchi's treatise, in which devotional themes are married with terminology used to discuss visual art and in some instances borrowed from classical literature. It is useful to remind ourselves of this devotional history since Bocchi's book must be understood in part as participating in the tradition of offerings to the Virgin: like the confraternal laude that were sung to images of the Virgin, or the wax votive figures that were deposited around the Annunziata fresco, the book was a gift to the Virgin herself and a sign of devotion. Sara Matthews-Grieco has demonstrated that around the time that Bocchi's book was published there was a short burst of devotional praises to the painting, as evidenced through a number of publications.[87] Amongst these, appearing a year following the publication of Bocchi's discourse, was a book published by Luca Ferrini dedicated to the miracles worked by the Annunciation fresco (discussed below), *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze* (A crown of sixty-three miracles of the Annunciation of Florence).[88] This book,

84 On Medici control in the church of the Annunziata image see Diane Finiello Zervas, " 'quos volent et eo modo quo volent': Piero de' Medici and the *Operai* of SS. Annunziata, 1445–55," in *Florence and Italy: Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein*, ed. Peter Denley, and Caroline Elam, (London: Committee for Medieval Studies, Westfield College, University of London, 1988), 465–479.

85 Ibid., 467. On the *tempietto* by Michelozzo, see Casalini, *Una icona di famiglia*, 41. On Piero de' Medici and the first written account of the image's creation, see Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 98–99.

86 On limiting access to the Madonna of Impruneta, see Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 11, 17. On the veil of the Annunziata fresco, see Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 99, and Andreucci, *Il fiorentino istruito*, 94–95, on the decree granting license only to the signorìa to have the image unveiled.

87 Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli."

88 Luca Ferrini, *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze* (Florence, 1593). Ferrini's book is discussed by Eugenio Casalini, *La ss. Annunziata di Firenze* (Florence:

recounting some miracles performed by the image, is described by Ferrini as a votive offering to the Virgin on the occasion of the author's own miraculous recovery from a lengthy illness;[89] if not motivated by such a specific votive intention, Bocchi's book participated nonetheless in the culture of devotional offerings to the painting. A further example of such literary offerings includes Fra Luca Ferrini's 1589 republishing of a history of the Servites, the monastic order that founded the church of the Santissima Annunziata, which had been written by Michele Poccianti and published in 1567.[90]

The celebration of the Annuziata image around the time of that Bocchi published his book has been interpreted by Matthews-Grieco as "an initiative, on the part of the Servite convent, to exercise a greater control over the representation of miracles."[91] It has also been considered in light of Counter-Reformation ideals that celebrated simplicity and primitive qualities in devotional art partly in reaction to Mannerist art.[92] The validity of these arguments will not be debated here as the purpose of the current study is not to identify the local circumstance that elevated interest in the painting, but rather to anatomize the ideological beliefs embedded within Bocchi's treatise and, eventually, to demonstrate how these are pertinent to the study of art theory in the Italian Renaissance in general.

Francesco Bocchi's Ekphrasis, Catharsis and Compunction

What most distinguishes Bocchi's *Imagine miracolosa* from other writings on the Annunziata fresco is that it was most likely the first treatise written to praise and analyze a miracle-working image in art-theoretical terms. Consequently it may be discussed as both a work of devotional literature and a work of art

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Convento ss. Annunziata, 1971), 54–56, especially note no. 17, on the sources for Ferrini's book.

89 As noted by Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli," 274.

90 See Michele Poccianti, *Vite de sette beati fiorentini . . . Il tutto composto dal P.M. Luca Ferrini*, trans. Luca Ferrini (Florence, 1589). In Ferrini's edition there are two discourses by Ferrini, one of which addresses the nobility of Florence, and includes a discussion of the art and artists of the city. At the end there is a list of the churches of Florence, and in some cases, descriptions of their most notable works of art. Another contemporary publication on the Servites is a dramatization of the founding of the order: Giovanni Angelo Lottini, *Rappresentatzione di sette beati fondatori della religione de' Servi* (Florence: Michelagnolo di Bart. Sermartelli, 1592).

91 Matthews-Grieco, "Media, Memory and the Miracoli," 277.

92 Waźbiński, "Il modus semplice," 634.

theory. Earlier manuscripts devoted to the Annunziata fresco recorded the miracles performed by the image, but Bocchi's treatise forged a relationship between the theory of art (as developed by himself and other writers) and the spiritual efficacy of the miraculous image. The treatise, therefore, did not merely praise the image as the work of God; it held the image up as an example for other artists to follow.

Although it is not explicitly presented as such in Bocchi's text, I will argue that the book's principal theme is the image's ability to effect religious compunction;[93] Bocchi dissects the experience of compunction provoked by the image and weds these features, one by one, to the principles of art theory. While some of the individual themes discussed below have been noted in the scholarly literature on this text and on Bocchi more generally, the main goal of this chapter is to show how these disparate details are consistent with the concept of compunction, and therefore that his aesthetic experience is patterned after a spiritual one. The degree to which this was a conscious intention cannot be discerned; the painting was frequently celebrated for having the power to compunct viewers, and so it is natural that Bocchi should evoke this theme as well. In addition to the penitential tendencies in the confraternal devotion in the context of the church, the compunctive efficacy of the painting is evident, for example, in Luca Ferrini's book; the people who prayed to the painting were often those who had sunk into the darkness of sin and who thus needed to be saved. Miracle number sixteen in Ferrini's book, for instance, recounts how Catherine, the Queen of Cyprus, was cleansed of her lustful desires by an act of compunction effected by the miraculous image.[94] Ferrini states that Catherine was "immersed, more than any other woman, in the sin of lustfulness," for which she was "many times compuncted with pain."[95] However, this compunction, not being strong enough, did not purge her of her sinful desires and so Catherine begged the Virgin to "make it such that, even if [she] will not be a virgin . . . make [her] at least chaste . . . [and] no longer . . . with such lust, nor with such infamy."[96] Following this supplication, compuncting her soul in a way that guilt alone could not accomplish, the miracle-working image

93 Trexler argues that conversion is the primary "miracle" that miraculous images can produce, "Being and Non-Being," 16.

94 "Una Regina di Cipro diventò casta Miracolosamente Mirac. XVI." Ferrini, *Corona di miracoli*, 42v.

95 "Caterina, Regina di Cipro, ritrovandosi grandemente immersa, sopra ogni altra Donna, nel'peccato della Libidine . . . piu volte compunta dal dolore." Ibid., 42v.

96 "Fa sì, che se bene non sarò Vergine come te, sia almeno casta: stringimi ti priego i lombi miei . . . acciò non piu viva con tanta libidine, ne' con tanta infamia." Ibid., 43r.

cleansed her desire. The story of the Queen of Cyprus recalls Titian's penitent Magdalene, and it demonstrates how the image could buttress human resolve in the face of temptation; visual images are often said to be very memorable, and Bocchi frequently discusses how the image of Mary is easily pressed onto the heart's memory.[97] Perhaps therefore, in moments of lustfulness, sinners are able to supplant a visual stimulus of lust with the visual memory of a compunction.[98] Clearly supporting Ferrini's views on the efficacy of the painting, Bocchi writes that "the end of [all] painting aims to virtue and to generate virtuous thoughts in those who contemplate [the painting], and to purge them, above all, of vices."[99]

One of the ways that Bocchi observes the compunctive effect of the painting within the soul of the viewer is by noting how the painting encourages the soul to reject material things, just as Catherine was moved to reject her lust. The power of the miracle-working image is described in a long passage in book two of Bocchi's text, in which he provides an ekphrastic description of the painting, visualizing each of the objects depicted therein.[100] Bocchi begins his ekphrastic description by noting "how beautiful, how elegant, how saintly organized" the painting is and that "it would not be without purpose to draw briefly each thing, part by part, as though to paint with words, as the artist did with colors."[101] Bocchi describes each object in the painting: Gabriel and Mary, the room in which they are located, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit coming to her. In this description of the painting, Bocchi emphasizes that the fresco is free of painterly ornaments and material indulgences, arguing that this inspires viewers to similarly reject sensual pleasures. The power of the painting, therefore, is due to its visual qualities and not only the grace of God. Or, more accurately, the restrained ornamentation evident in the painting is a miracle of God. For example, Bocchi writes that the room is "very simple in appearance,

97 This issue is further discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

98 The difficulty posed by returning temptations had been identified by Passavanti in his *Specchio della vera penitenza* as one of the main barriers preventing people from repenting: "L'altra desperazione che dá impedimento alla penitenza, è che l'uomo non spera di potere perseverare nell'opere della penitenza," 692.

99 "Il fine della pittura mira alla virtù, & al generar pensieri virtuosi in quelli, che contemplano, & purgarli sopra tutto de' vizii." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 61.

100 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 285–286, discusses the ekphrasis in terms of rhetorical speech and the sermon, a theme discussed below.

101 "Come sia bello, come leggiadro come santamente ordinato tutto questo magiestero della Nunziata . . . tuttavia e' non sarà fuor di proposito il disegnare con brevità ciascuna cosa à parte, à parte, & quasi dipignere con la favella, come ha fatto l'artefice co'colori." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 63–64.

painted in fresco, deprived of ornament";[102] one could not see a painting that was "more humble in study, nor of more holy purity";[103] the Virgin's robe is "made with pure and simple artifice, but without a doubt, gentle, beautiful and graceful . . . deprived of pomp . . . but full of majesty."[104] About the Virgin's hair, Bocchi remarks that "the hairstyle is not adorned in any part, but so simple, as one can see, and so pure, whilst it falls over her shoulders, that it surpasses every exquisite ornament, as well as the delicacy of all the hair clips, that are so esteemed by women."[105] Finally, Bocchi writes that "these features are seen, like human things, but [they are] made alive by a celestial appearance, they emanate divinity and marvel."[106] The importance of the ornament has recently been discussed by Schröder, who has also connected this theme to principles of Christian preaching, which I will revisit below.[107] In the following discussion, some of the possible values accorded to simplicity and the lack of ornament will be discussed further and with reference to some other sources to demonstrate how the issue borders on larger questions regarding materiality and religious experience in Renaissance art more generally.

It would be easy to believe that the insistence on the lack of ornamentation was intended simply to emphasize the Virgin's humility. This is certainly part of the explanation, and in fact Bocchi's description recalls the exhortation to women in the first book of Timothy where it is written that women should "dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes" (1 Timothy 2:9).[108] The Virgin's modesty in Bocchi's account follows these orders almost to the letter. In mendicant spirituality, the Virgin's humility was also emphasized since, as beggars, the friars defended the virtue of poverty and material humility. For example, in *La Vita Cristiana* by the Augustinian Simone Fidati da Cascia (1278/95–1348), we read about the poverty of Christ's birthplace (not in "beautiful rooms . . . but in a vile and common place") and the humility of the Virgin

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102 "una stanza di sembiante molto semplice, dipinta in fresco, priva di ornamento." Ibid., 64.

103 "veder non si puote studio più humile, ne più santa purità . . ." Ibid.

104 "fatta da puro, & semplice artifizio, ma senza dubbio tutta gentile, tutta bella, & tutta graziosa. . . . è priva di pomposa vista in ogni parte, ma piena di maestà." Ibid., 67.

105 "Non è la capellatura ornata in alcuna parte: ma cosi semplice, come si vede, & cosi pura, mentre che cade sopra le spalle, vince ogni isquisito ornamento, & tutta la dilicatezza di tutti fermagli, che sono alle donne cotanto in pregio." Ibid., 67.

106 "se veggono le fattezze, come cosa humana, ma fatte vive dal celeste sembiante spirano divinità, & maraviglia." Ibid., 67.

107 See Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 4.3.3–4. On sermons particularly, see 300.

108 "Similiter et mulieres in habitu ornato, cum verecundia, et sobrietate ornantes se, et non in tortis crinibus, aut auro, aut margaritis, vel veste pretiosa" (Latin Vulgate).

("she alone does all things required [in the house]") as an ideal worthy of imitation.[109] Similarly, in the popular spiritual manual of the thirteenth century, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, readers were exhorted to contemplate and imitate Christ's and Mary's poverty.[110] This tradition is continued in the meditational literature of the sixteenth century, in which Mary is described as an ideal model of humility. In a book of meditations from 1593 by Luca Pinelli, readers were asked to visualize Mary as having "blond hair, without art and without any human industry."[111] These citations could be multiplied *ad infinitum*, suggesting that Bocchi's description is merely a conventional evocation of the Virgin's virtue, a natural object of pious contemplation conducive to religious piety.

But the issue is more complex than this, for, by stressing the importance of simplicity and lack of ornament, Bocchi is linking an ideal of moral humility to artistic practice and returning to a theme that had concerned him in his earlier treatise on Donatello's sculpture of *St. George*. Bocchi praises the statue of St. George on the façade of Orsanmichele (home of another miracle-working image) for being free of ornament and displays of artistic showmanship. "Nothing," he writes, "is less satisfying to our appetite as is too much diligence, and too much exquisite ornament."[112] Bocchi cites classical and non-Christian authorities, however, to give authority to the beauty of unadorned things. For instance, he recalls a description by Terence of a virgin who was beautiful even though she had "nothing [no ornament] that would have helped beauty."[113] He refers to a story about the Greek painter Apelles, who disapproved of artists working with too much diligence, as well as a story of Alexander the Great who

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109 "com'è nato vilmente, non in casa propria, non intra belle sale, né cortine, nee camere, ma in luogo vile e comune." "Mira come la donna nostra non ha compagnia, ed ella sola fa tutte le cose, che questo mestiero ricerca." Simone Fidati da Cascia, *La Vita Cristiana*, in *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, ed. Arrigo Levasti (Milan: Rizzoli Editori, 1935), 613.

110 For a discussion of poverty in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, see Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, 147.

111 "capelli biondi, ma senza arte, e senza industria humana." Luca Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini e di brevi meditationi sopra la vita della Sacratissima Vergine Maria*, in *Libretto d'imagini e di brevi meditationi sopra alcuni misterii della vita, e passione di Christo Signor Nostro* (Venice, 1601), 11. This brief treatise is found collected in the above-cited volume with other such works by Luca Pinelli, reprinted from earlier editions (the preface to the book on the Virgin is dated 1593). The copy consulted is found in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MAGL. 15.6.120 000/a.

112 "Nessuna cosa è che meno al nostro appetito sodisfacci, come la troppa diligenza et i troppo isquisiti ornamenti." Francesco Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 188.

113 "nessuna cosa avea che aiutasse la bellezza." Ibid., 3: 189.

wished to have his army see him bathe naked so that they would appreciate that his strength was not due to exterior ornament.[114] Considering these two traditions—from biblical and Christian moral literature on the one hand, to classical literature on the other—one is inclined to believe that Bocchi is extolling a Christian moral virtue with classical authorities.

Ornament is profoundly related to the impact of the work and the spiritual feelings it inspires, and Bocchi asserts that restrained ornamentation moves the mind higher toward God through the rejection of sensual pleasure. There is thus an inverse relationship between the quantity of ornament and the compunctive efficacy of a work of art. In the treatise on Donatello's *St. George*, for example, Bocchi explains that lack of ornament allows the mind to move beyond the physical qualities of the work and to the contemplation of higher things embodied within the work of art. Donatello did not "take any care to use exterior ornaments," which keep the eye fixed "in the principal work . . . caring little for other things."[115] Donatello's attention, rather, was given to the simplicity and beauty of the work, which excites the mind of the viewer to higher contemplations.

> all [Donatello's] study . . . was placed . . . in uniting this beauty and this perfection; where, though it [the sculpture] is in a place of little space, the field of high and profound thoughts that one knows [through it], however, is great and copious, for which it is so much more deserving of praise, [for] it is so much less in need of the help of other [things], and so much greater is its beauty, the fewer are the ornaments that appear there.[116]

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114 "egli si dice di Alessandro Magno, come si compiaceva molto, quando in fiume bagnare si volea, che tutto il suo esercitio lo vedesse ignudo." Ibid. Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 201–02, discusses ornamentation and simplicity in Donatello's St. George with respect to masculine virtue.

115 "Molto dee valere, perché dentro agli animi altrui crescano le lodi tacitamente, che Donatello non volle prendere alcuna cura in usare ornamenti esteriori, né superflui fermagli in questa statua. Sono usati gli uomini accorti di affissare gli occhi nella principale opera, et in quella solamente mirare, poco curando ogni altra cosa, quantunque sia commendabile." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 188.

116 "tutto lo studio e tutto il suo ingegno pose il nostro sovrano artefice per unire questa bellezza e questa perfezzione; dove, comecché del luogo sia picciolo lo spazio, il campo tuttavia de' pensieri alti e profondi molto copioso e molto largo si conosce, onde ella tanto più è degna di lode, quanto meno dell'altrui aiuto gli è di bisogno, e tanto maggiore è la sua bellezza, quanto gli ornamenti minori vi appariscono." Ibid.

The lack of ornamentation, therefore, is directly related to the sculpture's ability to move viewers beyond physical thoughts to "high and profound thoughts." This theme is pressed further in the *Imagine miracolosa*, in which the unadorned style of the Annunciation painting moves Bocchi to ecstasy: "in this work very little human artifice appears . . . but throughout the entire work infinite wisdom is scattered; from which marvel is born of simplicity, and stupor from purity."[117] Halfway through the ekphrasis of the painting, Bocchi arrives at the face of the Virgin, the part of the painting said to have been painted by the hand of God. The face of the Virgin inspires Bocchi to meditate on the quality of a person that he calls their "*costume*," a term that might roughly be described as the "character" of a person, which I will discuss in more depth in chapter four. While contemplating the face, he is at a loss for words and wonders how he will be able to do justice to such a face with words alone. Whilst expressing this, Bocchi argues that he can no longer simply praise the humility observed in the rest of the painting, for so great is the rejection of terrestrial things perceptible on the Virgin's face, and so great are the spiritual thoughts that arise from this rejection, that human words can no longer be used to describe its divine quality. Bocchi asks himself

> will I say [simply] that it is humble in terrestrial things, where such divine humility can be seen? Will I say that it is so admirable in things that are base, that it lifts itself with celestial love up to the sky? That it so grazes upon human thoughts, that it nourishes itself on holy thoughts [which would be impossible]? . . . Like a great fountain, there grows in the soul of he who contemplates [this face] an ineffable vigor, full of every virtue, from which thoughts are admirably alighted, and plucked from the senses and enraptured outside of itself by a sweetness and unused virtue. This face, therefore, that in everything is divine, directs the view towards sublime things, towards the sky, and in some incredibly marvelous way unknown to me, it seems that, caring little for terrestrial things, and scornful of base things, it spurs itself to high desires, and it ignites itself with divine thoughts.[118]

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117 "Poco in questo nobil lavoro ci apparisce humano artifizio & poco humana industria ci si conosce: ma per entro l'opera tutta è sparso un infinito sapere; per cui nasce nella semplicità maraviglia, & nella purità stupore." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 71.

118 "Dirò io, che sia humile in cosa terrena, dove humiltà cosi divina tanto è palese? Che sia mirabile in cose basse, che si alza dall'amor celeste insino al cielo? che si pasca di avvisi humani, che altamente di pensieri santissimi si nutrisce? Non ispira virtù divisa verso di se, come avviene ne gli altri volti, hora di prudenza, hora di fortezza: ma, come da largo

Like the sculpture of St. George, therefore, the painting of the Virgin is in a simple style, or, perhaps more accurately, it is painted by an eye that observes the natural world but resists material indulgences. Moreover, on the face of the Virgin, we can observe a similar character that is free of material concerns. As such, looking at the face of the Virgin moves the mind to the contemplation of higher things and divine rapture; the difference between the painting by God and the work of Donatello appears only to be a question of degree.

Bocchi's criticisms of ornamentation have naturally been viewed in light of the ideals of the Counter-Reformation, which sought clarity in works of religious art in reaction to Mannerist art and its self-conscious display of artistry.[119] There is likely truth to this argument; as indicated above, the current study does not seek to identify Bocchi's attitude as the reaction to a single historical event, but rather to reveal how his writings participate with and transform traditional spiritual motifs. As discussed below, the belief, for instance, that one may be persuaded to reject material indulgences and experience divine beauty through ornamental austerity has precedents in the tradition of Christian rhetoric.

Though there is a long tradition for linking the theory of art in the Renaissance to classical rhetoric, comparatively less work has been done, with some important exceptions, to show the relationship between Christian rhetoric and Renaissance art theory.[120] Bocchi sees a clear relationship between sacred art and rhetoric: at the beginning of his treatise on *St. George*, for example, he compares sculptors to orators, and throughout that text all major terms are derived from rhetoric.[121] Furthermore, in his *Imagine miracolosa* Bocchi writes that the business of the painter is not unlike that of the orator, whose

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fonte, scende nell'animo di chi contempla un vigore ineffabile, colmo di ogni virtù, onde acceso il pensiero mirabilmente, & spiccato da' sensi à dolcezza, & à virtù non più usata fuori di se stesso è rapito. Questo volto adunque, che tutto è divino, drizza la vista verso le cose sublimi, verso'l cielo, & non so in che modo incredibilimente mirabile, pare, che poco di cosa terrena sia curante, & che sprezzate le cose basse si sproni ad alte voglie, & in pensieri divini si accenda." Ibid., 68.

119 Ważbiński, "Il Modus Semplice," 634. On the Counter-Reformation and sacred art, see chapter 5 of this study.

120 The relationship between rhetorical theory and art theory begins with Alberti, which is the topic of the following chapter. Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 298–300, discusses Bocchi and Augustine's theory of unadorned preaching, which I revisit and expand upon below.

121 On Bocchi's use of rhetorical terms in *San Giorgio*, see Thomas Frangenberg, "The Art of Talking About Sculpture: Vasari, Borghini and Bocchi," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995), 127. For Bocchi's comparision of sculpture to oratory, see discussion in Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento*, 3: 133.

aim is to persuade people "to awaken from the soul of the listener all of those thoughts that are contrary to the intention of the speaker, and afterwards to put in place those that are acceptable."[122]

Before exploring Bocchi and Christian preaching, I will examine how Bocchi's ideas compare to classical rhetoric; much art-historical literature has been concerned with exploring these sources, and in an attempt to define the character of Renaissance responses to sacred art it is instructive to see how faithfully Bocchi's values conform to classical antecedents. Bocchi's ideal of unadorned visual art finds a parallel in Cicero's *Orator*, so one might at first imagine that Bocchi's ideas on ornament are inspired by the Roman orator, especially considering the weight he gives to classical examples, noted above. In a passage well known in the Renaissance, Cicero compares his "plain style" of speaking to a woman who is beautiful even without ornament. He claims that

> as some women are said to be unadorned to whom that very want of ornament is becoming, so this refined sort of oratory is delightful even when unadorned. For, in each case a result is produced that the thing appears more beautiful.[123]

Art historians have elsewhere looked to this passage as the source for ornament-free aesthetics in Renaissance art theory and, given Bocchi's reliance on classical literature, one might imagine that Bocchi's discussions of the Annunziata image and the sculpture of St. George evoke the revival of these sources.[124] Cicero, however, would be an imperfect fit, for his plain style was thought not to have a strong emotional impact on the listener, but rather to give the impression of someone speaking casually: "the subtlety of his address

122 "svegliare dell'animo tutti quei pensieri, che nell'uditore sono contrarii all'intenzione del dicitore, & appresso stabilirvi quelli, che gli sono à grado." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 62.

123 Cicero, *The Orator*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London, 1852), 4: 404 (section 23 of the text). "Nam ut mulieres esse dicuntur nonnullae inornatae, quas id ipsum deceat: sic haec subtilis oratio etiam incompta delectat." Cicero, *Ad Marcum Brutum Orator*, ed. Franz Joseph Goeller, (Leipzig, 1838), 20.

124 Art historians have, in other contexts, argued that unadorned images follow Cicero's ideal. For instance, when Cristoforo Landino describes Massacio's style as "puro senza ornato" (pure without ornament) in his 1481 edition of Dante's *Commedia*, historians have attributed this ideal to Cicero. See Hellmut Wohl, " 'Puro senza ornato': Masaccio, Cristoforo Landino and Leonardo da Vinci," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56 (1993), 256.

appears easy of imitation . . . it is not endowed with the most extreme power."[125] This does not correspond to Bocchi's description of the spiritual ecstasy inspired by the fresco of the Annunciation. It is also clear that Bocchi had religious preaching in mind rather than any other form of public speaking, since he also argued that paintings should be like sacred orators who provoke people "who are stained with vice" to have "tears and [be] repentant for their errors . . . and . . . place their thoughts in God which before were occupied in terrestrial things."[126]

It is fitting therefore that Bocchi's notion of unadorned simplicity leading to spiritual ecstasy finds precedence in the Christian tradition of preaching in general as well as mendicant preaching specifically. Schröder has addressed Bocchi's praise of unadorned images in relationship to Augustine's discussion of preaching in simple language, a parallel that I revisit here to explore how Bocchi's description of the painting is patterned after the conventions of religious compunction, and to consider further its implications in the broader context of Renaissance art.[127] Bocchi's description of sacred orators who cause listeners to repent for their errors resembles St. Augustine's influential passages on preaching in *De doctrina Christiana*. Here, Augustine recounts that he persuaded the people of Caesarea to stop using violence by means of the "grand style" of preaching, which he knew had been effective "only when [he] saw them [the people of Caesarea] in tears."[128] The grand style was indifferent to ornament, being "not so much embellished with verbal ornament as inflamed by heartfelt emotion"; "words follow not from . . . elaborate vocabulary but from the promptings of a passionate heart."[129] In the grand style, the simplicity

125 Cicero, *Orator*, trans. Yonge, 4: 403. "Nam orationis subtilitas imitabilis illa quidem videtur esse existimanti, sed nihil est experienti minus. Etsi enim non plurimi sanguinis est, habeat tamen succum aliquem oportete." Cicero, *Orator*, ed. Goeller, 19–20.

126 "chi è di vizii maculato caggiono le lagrime sovente, & pentito de'suoi falli si duole di sua vita, & sciogliendo l'animo da'lacci del peccato, purgato, & . . . ponendo in Dio i suoi pensieri, che prima in cose terrene havea impiegati." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 62.

127 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 298–300. On unembellished rhetoric in Bocchi and Giovanni della Casa, see also ibid., 52–56.

128 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.24.53–54. "egi quidem granditer, quantum valui, ut tam crudele atque inveteratum malum de cordibus et moribus eorum avellerem, pelleremque dicendo." "non tamen egisse aliquid me putavi, cum eos audirem acclamantes, sed cum flentes viderem." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0115).

129 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 4.22.41. "Grande autem dicendi genus hoc maxime distat ab isto genere temperato, quod non tam verborum ornatibus comptum est, quam violentum animi affectibus." "Satis enim est ei propter quod agitur, ut verba congruentia,

of address has a gravity that can provoke repentance. Though written centuries before Bocchi's text, there is good reason to believe that the principles of Augustinian preaching were in circulation during Bocchi's time, particularly in the field of mendicant preaching in which some Augustinian principles were retained.[130] The history of mendicant preaching is complex, involving many different forms of public address, some for learned and others for common audiences; most relevant to the current discussion are penitential sermons for urban publics.[131] Mendicant sermons called Christians to a deeper spirituality by reminding them of their sins; Humbert of Romans (c. 1200–1277), a Dominican Master-General, noted that "the seed is sowed in preaching, the fruit is harvested in penance."[132] This process is illustrated clearly in a passage from the *Specchio di vera penitenza*, in which Passavanti describes a sinner who is moved to compunction through a sermon. Hearing a friar preach that the mercy of God is so great that no sinner who repents is refused, a woman "with many tears throws herself at the feat of the friar, asking mercy and penitence."[133]

Mendicants also advocated the use of simple, unadorned language, as recommended by Augustine. At the fount of this tradition is St. Francis who is reported to have preached to the laity in a simple and plain style known as the *sermo humilis*.[134] In this simple style, Francis' biographer Thomas of Celano informs us that content flowed passionately in simple words so as to bring

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non oris eligantur industria, sed pectoris sequantur ardorem." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, PL 034.0109).

130 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 298–300, looks at Augustine and Bocchi in relationship to Gabriel Paleotti's treatise on art, a text I discuss in chapter 6. In the current chapter, I am more concerned to show the broad context and tradition in which these ideas may have circulated.

131 See the discussion in Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 21; Lesnick, "Part Three: Preaching in Florence," in *Preaching in Medieval Florence*.

132 Humbert of Romans, *De eruditione praedicatorum*, 44, quoted in Barbara H. Rosenwein and Lester K. Little, "Social Meaning in the Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities," *Past & Present* 63 (1974), 22; original citation from Humbert of Romans, *Opera de vita regulari*, ed. Joachim Joseph Berthier (Rome, 1888–9), 2: 479.

133 "e tra l'altre cose che 'l predicatore disse, fu della misericordia di Dio, come era grandissima, e che niuno peccatore quantunque scellerato fosse, mai non rifiutava." "Alle quali parole compunta e contrita la peccatrice, fatta la predica, con molte lagrime si gittà a' piedi del frate, cheggendo misericordia e penitenza." Passavanti, *Specchio della vera penitenza*, 712. Although this particular woman is "compuncted with so much pain" ("tanto dolore la compunse") that she dies of sadness, the reader is assured that she is accepted by God when, according to Passavanti, a voice issues from the sky assuring those mourning her death that she is with God in heaven; Ibid., 713.

134 Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 136.

tears to his listeners' eyes.[135] Francis would speak "in a few words what was beyond expression, and using fervent gestures and nods, he would transport his listeners wholly to heavenly things."[136] Beyond simply adopting plain words to provoke profound spiritual experiences, Francis relied on silence and gestures to lift the soul to heavenly things. These principles are also reflected in the Franciscan devotional book, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, parts of which were likely written by a Tuscan preacher in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.[137] The author states that in the face of the profundity of the topic, the book will be composed as a "rough and unpolished sermon . . . for one should be diligent not in ornate sermons but in the contemplation of our Lord Jesus."[138] Here again the route to spiritual contemplation is in the rejection of ornament, an edict that is repeated many times in preaching manuals by medieval writers such as William of Auvergne, Humbert de Romans and Alain de Lille.[139] Finally, the principles in *De doctrina Christiana* have been shown to have had an influence on sixteenth-century preaching manuals, indicating

135 "And to the astonishment of all, preaching mostly by actions, he shortens his words . . . The hearts of the listeners are touched and they break out into tears." Thomas of Celano, *Second Life of St. Francis*, in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 515–516 [CXLIV, 191]. "Procedit sapiens sacco vestitus et cinere aspersus caput et mirantibus cunctis, facto plus predicans, abbreviat verba . . . Erumpunt in lacrymas auditorum corda compuncta, vereque sapientem." Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi according to Brother Thomas of Celano*, ed. Rev. H.G. Rosendale (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1904), 92–93. This passage is discussed by Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, 137.

136 Thomas of Celano, *Second Life of St. Francis*, 450 [LXXIII, 107]. "brevibus innuebat quod erat ineffabile et ignitos, interserens gestus et nutus, totos rapiedbat auditores ad celica." Thomas of Celano, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 56. Also discussed by Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, 138.

137 (pseudo-Bonaventure), *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated manuscript of the Fourteenth Century, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. Ital. 115*, trans. Isa Ragusa and ed. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). See Lesnick, *Preaching in Florence*, 143. Recently, Sarah McNamer has suggested that the book was originally written by a female religious, with additions made by a later friar. See *Affective Meditation*, and Sarah McNamer, "The Origins of the Meditationes vitae Christi," *Speculum* 84 (2009).

138 *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 4. See Lesnick, *Preaching in Florence*, 143.

139 See Harry Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in Some Medieval Tractates on Preaching," *Speculum* 2 (1927), 286. More recently see Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons and their Performance: Theory and Record," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

again the continuing relevance of his work.[140] Bocchi may not have been thinking specifically of Augustine or later medieval friars, but these sources illustrate that his notion of ornament inhibiting devotion is a concept richly present in late medieval spiritual literature, and that it was actively present in the religious context, broadly speaking, in which the painting was venerated.[141]

One reason that the power of a sermon can be measured by the economy of the preacher's words is that silence is desired for spiritual contemplation and meditation. Silence allows one to "go into [one's] room . . . and pray to [one's] Father who is in secret," (Matthew 6:6) as is recommended in Scripture, or to enter an internal space where contemplation can occur.[142] Likewise, visual ornaments might be considered a visual noise that distracts the heart from meditation.[143] The notion of the unornamented image as the silent prayer is evoked by Bocchi when he laments that he cannot find words to describe the Annunziata fresco. Bocchi concedes to simply "cover the face in silence" so that the "heart can think about the sweetness" of the Virgin's face.[144] Scholars have noted the presence of such statements in Bocchi's treatise on the sculpture of St. George.[145] However, when such a statement is made in Bocchi's *Imagine*

140 On Augustine's influence on Erasmus' *Ecclesiastes*, see John W. O'Malley, "Content and Rhetorical Forms in Sixteenth-Century Treatises on Preaching," in *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century: Preaching, Rhetoric, Spirituality and Reform* (Aldershot: Variorum, Ashgate Publishing, 1993), 243. Also, by the same author in the same book, see "Form, Content and Influence of Works About Preaching Before Trent: The Franciscan Contribution," 37.

141 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 54–56, has discussed Bocchi's interest in the orations of Giovanni della Casa, in which restrained ornamentation is also discussed.

142 "Tu autem cum oraveris, intra in cubiculum tuum, et clauso ostio, ora patrem tuum in abscondito: et pater tuus qui videt in abscondito, reddet tibi." (Latin Vulgate).

143 Features surrounding the painting, such as Michellozzo's *tempietto*, which physically separates the image from the rest of the church environment, create a space free of any of the "noise" that would hinder devotion. Timothy Verdon has argued that the classicism of Michellozzo's design might have self-consciously recalled an ideal past to link the devotee to the timeless messages of Christianity: "quando preghiamo insieme, usciamo dal quotidiano . . . e rientriamo nell'essenziale, nell'universale dell'ispirazione originaria che portò alla creazione di questo 'spazio di preghiera.' " Timothy Verdon, "Michelozzo e lo spazio della preghiera: il 'tempitto' della Santissima Annunziata," in *Michelozzo: Scultore e Architetto* (*1396–1472*), ed. Gabriele Morolli (Florence: Centro Di, 1998), 176.

144 "Quanto con più ragione di questo volto celeste, & rarissimo, si dee dire, il quale, se con silenzio si cuopre, si lascia, che il cuor pensi dalla dolcezza, che in se prova ineffabile." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 68. On the miraculous image creating experiences beyond words, see Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 290.

145 See Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, 210–212.

miracolosa, it evidently describes a spiritual experience and not merely his awe at the *ingegno* of an artist, since it was conventional to speak of the experience of God as being "beyond words." Famous examples include Dante's *Commedia*, where the vision of paradise is beyond words,[146] and earlier Gregory the Great described the experience of compunction as a "joy unspeakable . . . which can neither be concealed, nor yet expressed in words."[147] Thus when Bocchi marvels that the painting is so unadorned as to induce him to remain silent before it, he is conjuring the twin traditions of unornamented words/sermons powerfully provoking compunction and rapture, and the related concept of silence facilitating prayer and befalling those who experience divine contemplation.

At the end of his long ekphrasis this theme returns, although it is used to describe the painting as a whole rather than simply the face. Ultimately the effect of the painting is to move the viewer beyond reason. Bocchi writes that the painting is

> ordered with so much beauty, that it is a wonderful thing to say, how the thought of this singular artist was conformed to the opinion that the sacred writers had had in this affair . . . Because even in small things one can make out a mature sense . . . The work has been with exquisite diligence ordered in every part that it is with good reason that the more it is understood, the more it is admired. But to praise it, as would be just, no one claims [to be able]. Because, whilst one considers each thing part by part, without any doubt the less one has all reason, and lost in the splendor of such rare beauty, lacking words, and the senses, with silence one praises that which, certainly is understood, but goes ahead of all faculty of speech, no matter how great.[148]

146 Ibid., 211.

147 Gregory, *Morals on the Book of Job, part 1*, trans. Anonymous, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1847), 56. "Jubilum namque dicitur, quando ineffabile gaudium mente concipitur, quod nec abscondi possit, nec sermonibus aperiri; et tamen quibusdam motibus proditur, quamvis nullis proprietatibus exprimatur . . . Et cum vix ad hoc contemplandum sufficiat conscientia sentientis, quomodo ad hoc exprimendum sufficiat lingua dicentis?" Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, 24.6.10. (Migne, *PL* 076.0292).

148 "con tanta bellezza ordinato, che mirabil cosa è à dire, come il pensiero di questo singulare artefice sia conforme all'avviso che in questo affare hanno i santi scrittori, & come in ciascuna cosa partitamente sia raro il magistero, & mirabile, il quale con una sola veduta ci pone innanzi à gli occhi l'atto sovrano, & celeste. Perche ancora nelle cose picciole egli si scorge senno matura . . . L'opera tutta con diligenza isquisita è in ogni parte stata ordinata, & ben con ragione da chi più intende, più si ammira: ma di lodare, come è giusto, l'alto avviso nessuno di vero si da vanto. Perche, mentre che considera ciascuna

Bocchi's lengthy description of the painting, therefore, emphasizes that the more one tries to express the beauty and divinity of the painting, to draw in words each part of the painting piece by piece, the less one is able to convey the beauty of the work. In saying that the painter's representation of the Annunciation is in agreement with the account in sacred Scripture, Bocchi evokes the Christian tradition of biblical exegesis, in which the spiritual meanings of the Bible resisted expression in language.[149] The Bible, a divinely inspired text, contained mystical meanings which could be extracted from the literal words of the Bible, yet not openly conveyed by these words themselves, a concept that will be explored in more depth in later chapters.[150] St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, writes that "in Holy Writ, spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material things" since man attains "intellectual truths through sensible objects."[151] Similarly, in Bocchi's ekphrastic description, it is through meditation on the material details of the painting that he is eventually elevated to the state of wonder.

Ultimately, the context within which all of Bocchi's comments must be considered is the Neoplatonic Christian concept of the baseness of matter and nobility of the spirit. In Bocchi's view, the material Annunciation painting and the sculpture of St. George conduct the viewer to a higher intellectual experience; the disregard these images demonstrate for material concerns is evidence of their spiritual purity. Augustine formulates a classic exposition of this concept in his commentary on *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, in which he describes three levels of sight: corporeal sight (through the eyes), spiritual sight (corporeal sight recalled in the memory), and intellectual sight (the perception of abstract ideas without recourse to physical objects or their

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cosa à parte, à parte, senza alcun dubbio egli vien meno ogni ragione, & smarrito nello splendore di si rara bellezza, mancando le parole, & i sensi, con silenzio commenda in se quello, che di certo intende, che va innanzi ad ogni facultà di favella, quantunque grande." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 71–72.

149 See Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 283–86, on Bocchi's claims about the painting's authenticity, with discussion of theological writings and the picture's resemblance to the Virgin's house at Loreto.

150 See discussion in chapter 5 of this study.

151 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. the English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates and Washburne, 1912–1936), 1, q. 1, a. 9, electronic edition. http://www.nlx.com. "Est autem naturale homini ut per sensibilia ad intelligibilia veniat; quia omnis nostra cognitio a sensu initium habet. Unde convenienter in sacra Scriptura traduntur nobis spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. Josepho Pecci (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1927), 1. q. 1, a. 9.

memories).[152] The third level of sight is obviously the most noble. An example of corporeal sight could be the perception of the Annunziata image; an example of spiritual sight could be the recollection of the image in the mind's eye; and an example of intellectual sight could be the perception of the Virgin's virtue. Thus, the Annunciation painting and St. George appear to stimulate intellectual sight by their own virtuous disengagement with the very materials from which they are made. Like St. Francis, who preaches with his heart intent on the meaning of his words rather than the words themselves, the success of the Annunziata image lies in its ability to disregard material substance and thereby activate compunction. Augustine's ideas on spiritual sight have been frequently discussed by art historians engaging with the meditative function of art works; Bocchi's words are thus valuable for offering us a contemporary voice wrestling with the question of how sensual contact can transport viewers to immaterial realms.[153]

Bocchi's extended discussion on the unadorned quality of the painting and all the attendant issues it evokes relating to Christian oratory, prayer, and humility begs the observation that the image is, in reality, anything but unadorned. In fact, the painting is presently covered by a crown and many jewels and an ornate frame and glass.[154] During the Renaissance at the time Bocchi was writing, the image would have been adorned with countless ex-voto offerings, contributing to the visual noise encircling the altar. Michellozzo's tabernacle also obstructs the painting considerably, as would have the veil that usually

152 This concept will be explored in more depth in chapter 5. The relevant passages of Augustine are found in Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammon Taylor, 2 vols. (New York: Newman Press, 1982), book 12.

153 On Augustine's levels of sight in art history, see Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 2nd ed. (Doornspijk, The Netherlands: Davaco Publishers, 1984), chapter 1. More recently, see Meredith J. Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance: Art and Philosophy from Petrarch to Michelangelo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chapter 4.

154 The glass and metal frame dates to the seventeenth century, and the crown possibly dates to the fresco's official coronation in 1852; see Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 104–5. A description of the ornaments is given in Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine divise ne' suoi quartieri* (Florence, 1754–1762; Facsimile ed. Rome, 1972), 8: 3: "E primieramente si osservi la Corona sul capo di Maria, tutta rubini, e gemme ascendente al valore di 60. mila scudi, donata da Caterina de' Medici Regina di Francia; un cristallo alto quanto è la figura, rinnovato da Cosimo III. nel 1687. difende l'adorabile Immagine, sulla quale viene di ugual grandezza una custodia di argento massiccio dorata, avente nel mezzo di rilievo il Giglio di Firenze d'oro intrasiato . . ."

covered the fresco.[155] The strange inverse relationship between the quality that Bocchi praises and the actual state of the image is difficult to reconcile, and it is perhaps for his thoughts on this topic that Bocchi's text is most valuable to current art-historical discussions regarding sacred art: questions about ornament appear elsewhere in sources on Renaissance art, and often the discussion touches on the issue of how viewers relate themselves to the image. Bocchi's text seems to posit an unusual relationship between viewer and painting in that, through its own material humility, the image inspires the rejection of material concerns, and yet this conversion is commemorated through gifts to the painting that essentially obliterate its modesty.

To begin negotiating this tension, we may note Richard Trexler's suggestion, mentioned above, that the miraculous potential of images is activated by the accumulation of devotions they receive; in practice, a painting is only miraculous if it is venerated.[156] The ornaments and dressings received by paintings are signs of devotion, and hence, Trexler argues, ornaments signify an image's miraculous potential to move viewers.[157] Legends about miraculous images commonly describe how the image itself asks to be dressed as a sign of devotion, and therefore the ornamentation of the image is the first step in institutionalizing its miraculous abilities.[158] It is possible, therefore, that Bocchi views the unadorned simplicity of the image as the very quality that calls upon the viewer to dress it with devotional offerings: the image is simple and humble, as Bocchi repeatedly states, but as such it demands to be dressed with votive offerings and, in Bocchi's case, praised with increasingly ornate prose. The ornaments of which, as Bocchi writes, the Annunziata image is supposedly free might describe a state of nudity through which she calls upon the viewer to dress and adorn her, a call to which Bocchi replies with his literary praises.

If it is true that the presence of ornaments socially establishes an image as responsive to prayers, then there was a corollary tendency for votaries to view

155 See Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 105n32.

156 Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 23. Also see Trexler, "Being and Non-Being," 17: "Despite the lay patron's often enduring claim to and conventional association with an image, often devotees only reach a consensus and definitively affirm that an image is or was miraculous once it is in a church."

157 Trexler, "Being and Non-Being," 20. In support of Trexler's argument, see Richa, *Notizie istoriche*, 8: 13–14 on how the veneration of the image was enhanced by the covering of the image: "il tenerla coperta sia un modo mirabile, e laudevole di accrescere in noi tenerezza, e figudica all'intercessione di Maria, e l'esperienza porta cosa, che non segue forse in altro luogo, cioè ogni volta che ella scopresi, e si mostra, dare il popolo in eccessi di divozione . . ."

158 Trexler, "Being and Non-Being," 20.

ornamentation itself as that which guarantees miracles, and thus it may be that ornaments were used to stimulate devotional responses in viewers. Some literary sources suggest that this was the case. The relationship between ornaments such as gold and the affective power of painting is made in a sixteenth-century Portuguese dialogue by Francisco de Hollanda, in which Michelangelo appears as one of the interlocutors. In this dialogue, Michelangelo argues that devout paintings can move the viewer "to contrition . . . to repentance . . . to contemplation and fear and shame,"[159] though only people who are not intellectually sophisticated will be moved by poorer quality works.[160] Later in the dialogue, Michelangelo reveals that lower quality religious paintings are specifically those that use material ornament, since artists ought to imitate the natural world "not in gold or silver or delicate tints but simply drawn with a brush or with chalk or with a pencil in black and white."[161] Thus, though Michelangelo criticizes such ornamentation, it appears that he recognized its ability to evoke religious sentiment. This in turn may shed light on Vasari's criticisms of some religious paintings by Bernardino Pinturicchio, who he faulted for "making on his paintings relief ornaments of gold for the satisfaction of people who are not knowledgeable of this art," adding that the resulting perspectival confusions were tantamount to "heresy."[162] These examples recall Leon Battista Alberti's suggestion in *De pictura* that to be able to imitate gold is more worthy of praise than the use of gold itself in painted pictures, a comment that is

159 Francisco de Hollanda, *Diálogos em Roma (1538): Conversations on Art with Michelangelo Buonarroti*, ed. Grazia Dolores Folliero-Metz, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), 81. "Ela ao melancólico provoca alegria; ó contente e ó alterado ao conhecimento da miséria humana; ao desaustinado move-o à compunção; o mundano à penitência; o não contemplativo à contemplação e medo e vergonha." Francisco de Holanda, *Diálogos de Roma: Da pintura antiga*, ed. Manuel Mendes (Lisbon: Livraria sá da Costa, 1955), 28.

160 Hollanda, *Diálogos em Roma*, 77: these paintings will "cause [them] to shed a tear . . . [they] will appeal to women, especially to the very old and the very young, and also to monks and nuns and to certain noblemen who have no sense of true harmony."

161 Hollanda, *Diálogos em Roma*, 113. "E isto não com ouro, nem com prata, nem com tintas muito finas, mas sòmente come uma pena ou com um lápis desenhado, ou com um pincel de preto e branco." Holanda, *Diálogos de Roma*, 78–79.

162 Usò molto Bernardino di fare alle sue pitture ornamenti di rilievo messi d'oro, per sodisfare alle persone che poco di quell'arte intendevano, accio havessono maggior lustro e veduta, il che è cosa goffissima nella pittura. Havendo dunque fatto in dette stanze una storia di s. Chaterina, figurò gl'archi di Roma di rilievo, e le figure dipinte; di modo, che essendo inanzi le figure, e dietro, i casamenti; vengono piu inanzi le cose che diminuiscono, che quelle, che secondo l'occhio, crescono; eresia grandissima nella nostra arte." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 500.

normally viewed in light of the rise of Renaissance naturalism.[163] In the context of Bocchi, Michelangelo and Vasari's objections to ornament in religious contexts, some Christian sentiments regarding material indulgence might be perceived in Alberti's comment. Likewise, it was close to Alberti's time when the Dominican Giovanni Dominici advised parents not to keep images decorated with gold or jewels around children, warning that children seeing these images might only understand "to make reverence to gold and stones" rather than religious truths.[164] These sources thus register a reaction against ornament when used to generate an affective response; since miraculous paintings received ornamental devotions in gratitude for their responsiveness, ornaments, it appears, could be used to signify this potential and thus to activate devotional responses within viewers.[165] If this is correct, Michelangelo, Vasari and Alberti desire that the artist be engaged with the intellectual or spiritual concept embodied by the work of art rather than with using material ornaments to shortcut the viewer's devotional response pattern.

By celebrating the simple style of the Annunziata painting and the evident modesty of the Virgin, Bocchi appears to praise the "artist's" particular engagement with the material out of which the painting was created, focusing on the pious meaning of the subject so as to thereby inspire the same spiritual ascent within viewers.[166] Although some scholars have identified in Bocchi's attitude a desire for primitive imagery and a nostalgia for the seemingly more "authentically" pious paintings of fourteenth century Tuscan artists, I believe it would be more accurate to say that Bocchi desired the affective power of images to

163 Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, in *Opere volgari*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Bari: G. Laterza, 1973), vol. 3, 2.49 (citations of *De pictura* refer to book and paragraph number).

164 "ti guardi da ornamenti d'oro o d'ariento, per non fargli prima idolatri che fedeli; però che vedendo più candele s'accendono, e più capi si scuoprono, e pongonsi più ginocchioni in terra alle figure dorate e di preziose pietre ornate, che alle vecchie affumate, solo si comprende farsi riverenzia all' oro e pietre, e non alle figure o vero verità per quelle figure ripresentate." Giovanni Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, ed. Donato Salvi (Florence: A. Garinei, 1860), 133. This passage is discussed in Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 33 and in Trexler, "Dressing and Undressing Images: An Analytic Sketch," in *Religion in Social Context in Europe and America, 1200–1700* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), 401.

165 The ritual of crying and compunction, stimulated by outward behavior rather than through God's grace, has been discussed by Piroska Nagy, "Religious Weeping as Ritual in the Medieval West," *Social Analysis* 48 (2004); William Christian, "Provoked Religious Weeping in Early Modern Spain," in *Religious Organization and Religious Experience*, ed. John Davis (London: Academic Press, 1982).

166 In his discussion of this book, Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, also discusses the importance of the artist's virtue, a theme that I consider again with respect to Bocchi as well as other authors in chapters 4 and 5.

come from the piety evident in the painted work alone, and not through the ornamented additions to the image, nor through excessive displays of painterly skill. It would seem counter-intuitive to suggest that Bocchi desired all paintings to return to the primitive style of the Annunziata image, since this would contradict his own admiration for technically accomplished artists such as Andrea del Sarto, Michelangelo and Donatello; indeed, as noted above, Bocchi praises Michelangelo and Donatello for achieving a similar spiritual quality in their works. Therefore, Bocchi desired simply that paintings should, like the *sermo humilis*, take their power not from ornament but rather from the piety of the painterly representation; as we shall see in later chapters, this does not necessarily exclude painterly skill, since piety and scholarly contemplation were not mutually exclusive. Bocchi, therefore, viewed the unadorned nature of the image as the very quality that induces the awe of religious experience, which Michelangelo, in Hollanda's dialogue, argues is normally evoked in less sophisticated people by gold and silver. Perhaps more controversially, by linking Alberti and others who advocate naturalism over ornament to Bocchi, we see that the invectives against ornament might be related to the very Christian medieval beliefs that are normally believed to be the antithesis of Renaissance naturalism, which prides the rational study and representation of nature over decorative treatments.

Purging and Nourishing

In the experience of religious compunction, praises to God are not the only outpourings that are expurgated; as noted above, many tears and sighs are released as sin is purged from the soul. Likewise, in Bocchi's *Imagine miracolosa*, many tears accompany the viewing of the miraculous painting: the painting "takes hold of tears and sighs, and . . . [viewers] ask aloud for mercy for their errors."[167] These tears, in addition to being the manifestation of guilt and remorse, demonstrate sin being removed from the soul: the tears pouring forth are accompanied by vices leaving the soul, as though banished from the darkness by the light of such a miraculous painting: "like the shadow from the sun, vice flees from the marvelous effigy . . . purging the errors of the

167 "così rara vista egli si da di piglio alle lagrime, & a'sospiri, & mentre che altri conosce, quanto è debole, quanto è frale l'humana sua condizione, chiede mercè con alte voci de'suoi falli." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 69.

soul such that then holy thoughts may be born, and honest desires."[168] The painting thus pierces the soul with grief and a desire to reject the material world, and then begins purging the stains of the soul with tears.

Believing that the purging quality of the painting had a wider application to the theory of art, Bocchi wedded the concept of penitential purgation with the Aristotelian concept of poetic catharsis or purgation.[169] Bocchi's treatise in praise of Andrea del Sarto is said to be the first known attempt to apply Aristotle's *Poetics* to the visual arts, and therefore, understandably, Bocchi is often read in the light of Aristotle.[170] The concept of catharsis is not a primary concern in the early treatise on Andrea del Sarto, though it is important in the treatise on St. George and his *Imagine miracolosa*. As in the classical citations regarding ornament, however, Bocchi evokes Aristotle not to bring a wholly new concept into the field of art theory, but rather to give authority and a vocabulary to a Christian experience. In his *Imagine miracolosa*, Bocchi writes that

> painting is very similar to poetry, as literary men say . . . Poetry, as occurs in tragedy, by means of pity and fear, affects purgation; that is, it cleans from the soul those affects that are contrary to pity and fear.[171]

Bocchi then attributes these words to Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which the philosopher writes that tragedy is "mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; . . . employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions."[172]

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168 "Come l'ombra dal sole, fugge il vizio dalla mirabile effigie & si dilegua quel malvagio pensiero, che ci suia sovente da' sentieri dal cielo, purgando di errori l'animo in guisa, che poscia santi avvisi ne nascono, & voglie honeste." Ibid., 55–56.

169 On Bocchi and catharsis, see Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 255–256, 285.

170 See Williams, "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi."

171 "È la pitura alla poesia simile molto, come dicono gli huomini letterati . . . La poesia, come avviene nella tragedia, per lo mezzo della misericordia, & ancora dl timore, fa la purgazione; cio è netta dell'animo quelli affetti, che del tutto alla misericordia, & al timore sono contrarii." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 56.

172 Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell, in *Aristotle: Poetics; Longinus: On the Sublime; Demetrius: On Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 47–49 (1449b19–30). This English translation is not very far from an Italian translation that was published by Bernardo Segni, see Aristole, *Rettorica et poetica d'Aristotile tradotte di greco in lingua volgare fiorentina*, trans. Bernardo Segni (Venice, 1551), 171: "conducendo l'espurgatione degli affetti non per via di narratione, ma per via di misericordia, & di timore." Segni's commentary on this passage (173) reveals that he, like Bocchi, believed

Despite the fact that Bocchi identifies his concept of purgation with Aristotle's, as Schröder has noted, they are notably different, since in Bocchi's text an image of virtue will purge its opposite.[173] To purge the soul, Bocchi writes that artists must represent sacred figures such that they have the virtue proper to a saint.[174] The sight of such a virtuous person is like a tragic poem because virtue seen "on the face, which shows divine thought, and purity" then "enters into the soul" of the viewer and drives "out the vices [so that] the soul becomes a home to holiness and virtue."[175] Though the meaning of Aristotle's catharsis is still debated, he did not write that it was caused by seeing someone virtuous. Rather, an action "representing fearful and pitiable events" causing catharsis was, for example, seeing a man "who falls into adversity not through evil and depravity, but through some kind of error."[176] Thus, one might paraphrase Aristotle's purgation as the empathy felt for the mistakes of others, whereas Bocchi is purged by the Virgin through the pain of guilt felt for not having lived a virtuous life, which is then followed by the release of tears and thereafter the imitation of virtue.[177]

Clearly, the intense purgation felt by viewers of the Annunciation was attributed to the hand of God working through the miraculous image. Nonetheless, Bocchi felt that mortal artists might also achieve works of art with purgative efficacy. The theme of purgation arises in his discussion of Donatello's *St. George*, about which Bocchi writes that

> There is no one who does not affirm . . . that the great [virtue seen on the face] of St. George does not remove . . . from the mind thoughts that are vile and base, and does not refill it with . . . magnificent and high thoughts.[178]

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that the purgation, in one way or another, affected more virtuous behavior on the part of the spectator. Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 256, notes Piero Vettori's commentary with reference to Bocchi's views on catharsis.

173 See Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 255, 285.

174 The issue of how one was to represent a figure making their virtue evident (Bocchi claimed that this was done via the figure's *costume*) is discussed in chapter 5.

175 "parimente dal costume, & dal volto, che spirano pensier divini, & purità, entra nell'animo un visio tutto colmo di lode, per cui scacciati i vizii diviene albergo l'animo di santità, & di virtù." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 56.

176 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 69–71 (1452b30–35, 1453a1–12).

177 The imitation of virtue is, naturally, an important concept in Aristotelian writings, which will be considered in chapter 4. Purgation, in the *De poetica*, however, appears to have little to do with the imitation of virtue.

178 "perocché nessuno è che non affermi e non renda testimonianza, che il costume magnanimo del San Giorgio non rimuova e non discacci dalle menti i pensieri bassi e vili, e di

The efficacy of Donatello's sculpture can be explained rationally because the viewer, "fixing his eyes in the work . . . will be spurred on to imitate [the sculpture]."[179] However, when Bocchi writes that St. George was made "not by a mediocre [artist] but a sovereign [artist] . . . and without a doubt lifted above human ability," it is hard to distinguish this rhetoric from that used to describe the Annunziata image.[180]

Bocchi thus awkwardly translates Aristotelian poetics into the realm of Christian devotional art; however, he further patterns his notion of purgation after Christian compunction by linking purging and nourishing. The effect of compunction is also known through the experience of spiritual nourishment, and in this, too, Bocchi conforms to a medieval tradition in which the rejection of worldly goods was characterized as food for the soul.[181] Bocchi describes the face of the Virgin as something that does not "so graze upon human thoughts . . . it nourishes itself on holy thoughts."[182] Bocchi's choice of words emphasizes the lowliness of bodily food by associating it with animals: terrestrial human thoughts were "grazed" (*pascere*), as though by animals, while celestial thoughts "nourish." Later, Bocchi writes that "vice, which grazes on darkness, immediately flees from the excess of such light" coming from the miraculous Annunciation.[183] The effect of the image "sweetly undresses/sheds terrestrial affects and with celestial thoughts it [the soul] is refilled."[184] Once again, however, this spiritual feeding is not only within the domain of the miraculous image. Bocchi credits Michelangelo with having given his works ornamental simplicity that fed the viewer with spiritual thoughts.

> [Michelangelo's] sculptures and paintings are not enveloped in ornaments. There is no place for frivolous things, nor little pleasures, but [rather] gravity of design, profound intelligence, and wise thoughts in every thing, that, since they have taken the souls of others, they graze upon this honorable food, and fill their minds with wise thoughts.[185]

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magnifichi et alti non le informi e non le riempia." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 146–147.

179 "affisando gli occhi nelle opere di Donatello . . . sarà spronato ad imitarle." Ibid., 3: 148.

180 "non mediocre ma sovrano, non terreno ma divino e senza fallo sopra l'uso umano innalzato." Ibid., 3: 168.

181 See, for example, the discussion of Gregory's renewal of the soul during compunction in Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 223–227.

182 "Dirò io . . . che si pasca di avvisi humani, che altamente di pensieri santissimi si nutrisce?" Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 68.

183 "il vizio, che si pasce di tenebre, tosto fugge dal soverchio di tanta luce." Ibid., 70.

184 "cosi di affetti terreni soavemente lo spoglia & di pensieri celesti il riempie." Ibid.

185 "Non sono le sue statue, né le pitture parimente, involte in ornamenti; non vi ha luogo cosa frivolta né diletto leggiere, ma gravità di disegno, profonda intelligenza, e savio

Bocchi's notion of works of art that nourish as they purge the soul is preceded by a long tradition in which the comfort of spiritual nourishment is explicitly linked to the pain of compunction. For example, in Psalm 42 it is written that "my tears have been my food day and night."[186] This passage is interpreted in the *Specchio della vera penitenza* to mean that "one feeds pleasurably on continuous sadness and tears, as man [feeds] on bread."[187] Similarly, St. Bonaventure, in his *Specchio dei xxv gradi* (Mirror of 25 grades), encourages the soul to "begin to fatten [itself] . . . on the mercy of your God," again linking penitence to spiritual food.[188] The conflation of tears and food must have been strengthened by the reality that, in times of famine, bread was distributed at Orsanmichele in Florence, the home of another miracle-working Madonna around which similar devotional practices flourished.[189] The devotional relationship between food and penitence was also lived by those who were instructed to fast after confession as penance for their sins, a common act of atonement during the Renaissance. Therefore, Bocchi's notion of the image as nourishment is in harmony with the lived rituals of Renaissance Italy.

Clearly the theme of spiritual nourishment also recalls the veneration of the Eucharist, which increased once the elevation of the host during mass was instituted. One may take, as an example, the *Life* of St. Catherine of Siena, who survived being deprived of bodily nourishment because strength was given to her body by the spiritual gifts of the body of Christ.[190] St. Catherine was so dedicated to the renunciation of worldly goods that even a bit of food caused her spiritual and physical pain: "she suffered more from having to eat than a famished man does from being unable to,"[191] and furthermore, "when she received Holy Communion, such an abundance of graces and heavenly

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avviso in ogni affare, che, poiché hanno preso l'animo altrui, pascono quello di cibo orrevole, e di savio pensiero lo riempiono." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 189.

186 "Fuerunt mihi lacrymae meae panes die ac nocte." (Psalm 41, Latin Vulgate).

187 "dove volle dire che si pasceva del continuo dolore e del pianto suo dilettevolmente, come l'uomo fa del pane." Passavanti, *Specchio della vera penitenza*, 709.

188 "O anima mia, io ti priego che tu incominci ad ardere, incominci ad ingrassare, incominci a dolcire nella misericordia del tuo Iddio." St. Bonaventure, *Lo Specchio dei xxv gradi*, in *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, ed. Arrigo Levasti (Milan: Rizzoli Editori, 1935), 205. On this theme, see also Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 208.

189 See Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 281.

190 On this theme, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). The legend of St. Catherine would have been available in a variety of sources; for example, an Italian translation by Ambrosio Caterino da Siena was published in Venice in 1574.

191 Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. George Lamb (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1960), 39.

consolations" followed that "not only did she have no need of food but she could not in fact take any without it causing her pain."[192] Similarly, in a treatise written by Luca Pinelli exhorting people to meditate upon the sacrament of communion, the author asks readers to consider "how other foods maintain only the body, but [the Eucharist] nourishes the soul in spiritual life," and, moreover, this food "does not convert into the substance of he who eats it, as becomes of natural food, but it converts us into itself."[193] There is a similarity between Pinelli and Bocchi in that in each case the power of the image or the power of food nourishes the soul by transforming it into a mirror of itself.[194] The transformative power of the Eucharist is also similar to the power of the painting in its ability to heal as medicine does. Some scholars suggest that the cult of the Annunziata may have blossomed during the times of plague since the Servites were known for helping the sick and similarly Christ's body was thought to be medicine for the soul.[195]

In passing, it is worth noting that the concept of image as spiritual nourishment is not unique to the sixteenth century. A similar literary construction appears in the famous letter written by Leonardo Bruni to Niccolò da Uzzano on the design for the doors of the Baptistery of Florence. He writes that the stories on the doors should have both *illustri* and *significanti*, terms that Michael Baxandall has convincingly demonstrated were borrowed from, in part, Ciceronian rhetoric.[196] These words are then placed into a construction that contrasts bodily feeding with spiritual nourishment. Bruni writes that "*illustri* we call those things that can well feed (*pascer*) the eye with variety of design; *significanti*, those things that have importance worthy of memory."[197]

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192 Ibid., 152.

193 "Considera, come gli altri cibi sostentano solamente il corpo: ma questo nodrisce l'anima nella vita spirituale." "Considera, come questo cibo celeste non si converte nella sostanza di chi lo mangia, come aviene a gli altri cibi naturali; ma egli converte noi in se." Luca Pinelli, *Brevi, & divotissime meditationi del Santissimo sacramento e della preparatione alla sacre communione, con le sue imagini* (Brescia, 1606), 22.

194 See Verdon, "Michelozzo e lo spazzio della preghiera," 172, where this theme is discussed with respect to Michelozzo's tabernacle.

195 On the Eucharist as medicine see Simone Fidati da Cascia, *La Vita Cristiana*, 669: "Veramente il corpo di Cristo è la medicina sanativa, restaurativa, confortativa de' peccatori, consolazione e accrescimento di grazia degli giusti." On the Servites and healing see Holmes, "Elusive Origins," 113.

196 See Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 19. Cicero's *De partitione oratoria* is cited.

197 "*Illustri* chiamo quelle, che possono ben pascer l'occhio con varietà di disegno; *significanti* quelle, che abbino importanza degna di memoria." Ibid., 19. See also Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 196–197.

Once again, the corporal food of the eye is contrasted with the significance that will stay in the mind.

There is, therefore, in Bocchi's text a continuing tension between the material image and the immaterial thoughts it produces: it is a physical work of art, yet it seems to reject ornament and inspires viewers to heavenly thoughts; it is a material object yet it provides only spiritual nourishment. It is not surprising that the praise of a work of sacred art should precipitate this tension, since most of the literary conventions with which mystical compunction were described were articulating a mental or meditative experience and not the experience of an object. Compunction, as an aspect of monastic meditation arising from Scriptural exegesis, has been described by the medieval scholar Mary Carruthers as a violent, grief-stricken emotion that meditators induce within themselves by conjuring "emotion-filled imagining as one recites or chants the Psalms, the Passion, and other suitable texts."[198] Bocchi is somewhat like these meditators in that his text moves the reader with him as he embarks on his own meditation upon the parts of a religious image, ultimately leading him to compunction. However, Bocchi's compunction is not induced by meditation, nor are the images that lead to compunction mental images. Rather, Bocchi's compunction is an experience of a material image working directly on him. Bocchi slows down the description of compunction in his ekphrasis of the Annuziata painting in order to watch himself as he contemplates the image, but ultimately compunction is the direct effect of the physical image. It is problematic, however, to locate the inspiration for compunction on a physical object, since the experience itself seeks to reject material objects. As will be seen throughout this study, this is a tension that is dealt with by various Renaissance writers on art, which will be a dominant theme in this study.

Bocchi's ekphrasis of the miraculous painting of the Annunciation conveys the painting as a vehicle through which God accomplishes compunction within the soul of the viewer. This is relevant not only to the painting of the Annunciation; according to Bocchi at least, it is an experience that is also inspired by other man-made works of art to varying degrees. In order to understand Bocchi's texts, and the citations of and allusions to classical literature made in his writings, it is important to place these themes within the wider frame of Christian spirituality. Given the similarities between Bocchi's writings and those of other Renaissance authors, this analysis also makes clear the need to consider the Renaissance literature on art more broadly in light of Christian spiritual literature.

198 See Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 103–105.

CHAPTER 2

Leon Battista Alberti's 'De pictura' and the Christian Tradition of the Liberal Arts

An Image Formed in the Mind and an Imitation of Nature

Chapters two and three of this book analyze how Renaissance authors describe the artist's creative process in terms that recall spiritual practice. Renaissance authors suggest that the artist must maintain an intellectual discipline that bears similarity to the discipline of prayer and meditation; even in artistic study, the artist's activity must retain a spiritual cast. This argument may not be surprising in itself; art historians familiar, for instance, with Cennino Cennini's handbook on painting will recall that the author invokes Christ and the Virgin before beginning work,[1] and in Vasari's *vita* of the beatified painter Fra Angelico, the aretine biographer notes that the friar always prayed before painting.[2] However, art historians have not, so far as I am aware, noted the more subtle ways in which this practice is codified in some of the most important writings on art from the early Renaissance, which are the foci of chapters two and three of this book: Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* and Leonardo da Vinci's writings on painting. If miraculous properties were attributed to some images, as shown in chapter one, I argue that the works of mortal artists had affective powers by virtue of being designed in the minds of artists before being formed in matter, thus carrying some of the spiritual qualities of the artist's mind. By looking at the artist's intellectual practice in Alberti and Leonardo through the lens of spiritual literature, we can observe how both writers draw upon this literary tradition in order to frame the artist's work as a reflection of the piety of their soul.

One of the central issues at stake in discussions of the artist's intellectual practice is their attitude toward the study of nature, which entails how the artist relates themself to the material world. The naturalistic techniques that

1 "Inchominciando allavorare in tavola chol nome della Santissima Trinita, invochando senpre suo nome, e della gloriosa Vergine Maria." Cennino Cennini, *Il libre dell'arte*, ed. Daniel V. Thompson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), chapter 104.

2 "Dicono alcuni, che fra' Giovanni non harebbe messo mano ai penelli, se prima non havesse fatto orazione. Non fece mai crucifisso che non si bagnasse le gote di lagrime." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 363.

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emerged in the Renaissance required artists to scrutinize the material world more closely and thus this practice conflicted with the commonly held belief that works of art were made according to plans in the artist's mind. This traditional, medieval view of art is formulated succinctly by Dante, amongst others: "There are three grades in art, namely as art exists in the mind of the artificer, in his instrument, and in the matter that is given form by art."[3] Similar statements can be found in Renaissance literature on art in innumerable citations, thus demonstrating, as we know, that the medieval belief did not evaporate with the advent of different image-making practices. In the late sixteenth century, for example, sculpture and painting were defined by the writer Raffaello Borghini as "arts . . . that make visible that which was in the mind of the artist."[4] Other authors state that paintings are formed with "inventions that come . . . from the mind of the painter";[5] furthermore, a sculpture is "contemplated in the mind [of the sculptor] and then expressed in the marble";[6] artists search for "inventions with the mind . . . forming those perfect ideas that are then expressed and represented by the hands from that which was conceived in the intellect";[7] before beginning to paint, a painter will "think a lot to the order and method by which" a painting will be done.[8] Such citations could be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but they make clear that the creation of images was foremost an interior experience.

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3 "Sciendum est igitur quod, quemadmodum ars in triplici gradu invenitur, in mente scilicet artificis in organo et in materia formata per artem." Dante Alighieri, *Dante's 'Monarchia': translated, with a commentary*, ed. and trans. Richard Kay (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), 96–97. Erwin Panofsky, *Idea*, 43, uses this definition as a summary of the medieval view of art. The concept is also found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

4 "La scultura, e la pittura sono arti . . . che . . . fanno apparire ciò che era nella mente dell'artefice." Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 51.

5 "Appare, che la inventione vien da due parti, dalla historia, e dall'ingegno dell Pittore." Ludovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino*, ed. and trans. Mark Roskill, in *Dolce's 'Aretino' and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, by Mark Roskill (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 128–129.

6 "contemplare nella sua mente et isprimere poi nel marmo con felice artifizio pensieri eroichi e gentili." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 132–133.

7 "cercando con la mente l'invenzioni, & formandosi quelle perfette idee, che poi esprimono, & ritraggono le mani, da quelle gia concepute ne l'intelletto." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 6.

8 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Penguin, 2004), 3.61. Citations of *De pictura* refer to book and paragraph number. Many of Grayson's translations have been modified by the author. "prius diutius excogitabimus quonam ordine et quibus modis eam componere pulcherrimum sit." "penseremo qual modo e qual ordine in quella sia bellissima." Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61.

In the Renaissance literature on art, however, the above statements are linked to another definition of art, this one traditionally thought to be of classical origin: "art is an imitation of nature."[9] Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, for instance, writes that "epic and tragic poetry, as well as comedy . . . are all, taken as a whole, kinds of mimesis."[10] Such sentiments are translated into the domain of painting in the Renaissance, when Alberti exhorts painters to observe the natural world when painting.[11] In the sixteenth century this idea is codified, for instance, in the writings of Ludovico Dolce who defines painting as "nothing other than the imitation of Nature."[12] Likewise, Raffaello Borghini links the imitation of nature to the artist's mind, writing that painting and sculpture are created "in the mind of the artist; whilst imitating those natural and artificial things that are or can be."[13] Such statements have historically been held as examples of the rational, objective thought that emerged in the Renaissance in conjunction with the revival of classical literature and in reaction to medieval disinterest in nature. Though there is doubtlessly some truth to this picture of Renaissance art history, definitions of art as imitation were preserved in the Middle Ages, at which time they were given a distinctly religious formulation.[14] For instance, Chalcidius, in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, establishes a lineage between the works of man and of God, writing that "all things that exist are the work of God, or the work of nature, or the work of a human artisan imitating nature."[15] The proliferation of this concept in the late Middle Ages led the medieval historian Père M.-D. Chenu to write that "the relationship to God's creative work conferred a religious significance upon human productive activity."[16] This chapter aims to untangle the religious meaning of the imitation of nature in Renaissance art theory by examining the activity of the artist's

9 See Rensselaer W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis," 203–210.

10 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 29 (1447a).

11 Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.55.

12 "La Pittura, brevemente parlando, non essere altro che imitatione della Natura." Dolce, *Dialogo*, 96–97. Lee, 'Ut Pictura Poesis', 205, notes that Dolce argues paintings should improve upon nature.

13 "fanno apparire ciò che era nella mente dell' artefice; imitando insiememente le cose naturali, e l'artificiali, che sieno, ò che possan essere." Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 51.

14 For example, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q. 117, a. 1. "ars imitatur naturam in sua operatione."

15 Chalcidius, chapter 23, is quoted in Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, 41. Chenu cites the following editions: Chalcidius, *Platonis Timaeus interprete Chalcido cum eiusdem commentario*, ed. Johannes Wrobel (Leipzig: In aedibus B.G. Teubnari, 1876); F. Mullach (ed.), *Fragmenta philosophorum graecorum*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1881).

16 Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, 40–41.

mind in study and composition. Although it is a truism to say that by painting nature, Renaissance artists honored the beauty of God's work, this chapter will investigate exactly how Renaissance literature advised artists to attend to this task. Particularly, this chapter on Alberti will explore how artists were meant to situate themselves in relation to the nature that they were studying and the matter that they were creating. Having explored in the previous chapter how attitudes toward the materiality of ornament in art emerge from a long spiritual tradition concerning the soul's attention to matter, this chapter demonstrates how Alberti's naturalism codified an artistic approach to nature and the material world in terms that recall aspects of this spiritual tradition.

The relationship between mind and nature in Renaissance art has received much attention, as countless studies demonstrate that understanding the natural world was integral to the Renaissance artist's practice (assuming that understanding is essential to imitation).[17] This chapter, however, investigates the Christian heritage from which Renaissance art theory emerges to reveal how the imitation of nature could entail spiritual practices. The mind's study of nature was a meditation on God's works, and, as such, the seemingly scientific or rational studies of Renaissance artists can also be described as attempts to come closer to God. Thus, the qualities given to the imitation of nature by the mind of the artist were spiritual qualities. This is distinct from two prevailing interpretations of the relationship between mind and nature in Renaissance art theory, which are discussed in more depth below. Briefly, the Platonic philosophy argues that the mind can recognize divine principles in nature because the Ideas of God reside in the mind of man, and the Aristotelian philosophy asserts that the mind extracts the principles of divine order from nature. Though both of these philosophies were relevant in the Renaissance, this study seeks primarily to show how the process of imitating nature had strong similarities to Christian spiritual and meditational practices.

The thesis explored here, thus, proposes that an image's ability to provoke a spiritual experience in the viewer was a consequence of the way artists related themselves to the objects they studied. An image of a body, for example, demonstrates not just the artist's understanding of anatomy, but also his or her pious inclination toward that body and the piety maintained during study.

17 The relationship between scientific understanding of the natural world and art in the Renaissance is broadly investigated in Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). On "naturalism" and Renaissance art see Summers, introduction to *The Judgment of Sense*. On certain philosophical problems around naturalism and illusion, see also Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, part 1, chapter 2.

St. Augustine wrote that when the mind "fastens together . . . images" of nature, "in forming [these images] it gives them something of its own essence."[18] This study proposes to explore, therefore, what essence the mind gives to the objects it imitates. In the thirteenth century, St. Bonaventure wrote that the products of the natural world were "vestiges [in the sense that a footprint is a vestige of a foot] in which we can see our God."[19] Likewise, centuries later, Leonardo da Vinci wrote that painting was like the grandchild of nature (nature being God), since it had been born from the mind of man, nature's child.[20] Therefore, following these two propositions, an image created in imitation of nature, if formed by a mind meditating on God's presence within nature, was a sign of both the artist's mind and its perception of God's presence.

In view of this, this chapter describes what may be called a Christian attitude toward the imitation of nature: artists were exhorted to maintain a spiritual discipline while painting and studying, and to meditate on God's presence within the objects they were studying, thereby coming closer to God. This meditative process of painting is outlined in what may reasonably be called the first theoretical treatise on painting of the Renaissance, the short book by Leon Battista Alberti entitled *De pictura*/*Della pittura* (1435–1436).[21] Typically, Alberti is interpreted in the light of classical literature, and it is generally agreed that Alberti sought to place painting amongst the liberal arts in line

18 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 10.5.7. "Et quia illa corpora sunt, quae foris per sensus carnis adamavit, eorumque diuturna quadam familiaritate implicata est, nec secum potest introrsum tanquam in regionem incorporeae naturae ipsa corpora inferre, imagines eorum convolvit, et rapit facta in semetipsa da semetipsa. Dat enim eis formandi quiddam substantiae suae." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL*, 42.0977).

19 St. Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, in *The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 2.7. "Haec autem omnia sunt vestigia, in quibus speculari possumus Deum nostrum." St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Charles Adolphe Peltier (Paris, 1864–1871), 12: 8. St. Bonaventure uses the word vestige to refer to signs such as footprints, see Cousins in the introduction to St. Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, 27.

20 Leonardo da Vinci, *The Literary works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. and trans. Jean Paul Richter and Irma A. Richter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 1: 38, no. 13. "e veramente questa è scientia e legittima figlia di natura, perche la pittura è partorita da essa natura; ma per dir più corretto, diremo nipota di natura, perche tutte le cose evidenti sono state partorite dalla natura . . . Adonque rettamente la chiameremo nipota d'essa natura et parente d'Iddio."

21 Alberti wrote both a Latin and an Italian version of his treatise. Regarding the dating of these texts see Cecil Grayson, "Studi su Leon Battista Alberti," *Rinascimento* 4 (1953), and Rocco Sinisgalli, *Il Nuovo 'De Pictura' di Leon Battista Alberti* (Rome: Kappa, 2006).

with the classical tradition of the arts. This thesis is normally supported, as outlined below, by demonstrating that Alberti emphasizes the intellectual rather than mechanical nature of painting, and by comparing Alberti's text to some standard classical manuals on the liberal arts, notably those by Cicero and Quintilian. In this chapter, on the other hand, Alberti's text will be examined in light of the Christian tradition of the liberal arts, with an emphasis on the Augustinian philosophy of the liberal arts, and more generally the spiritual literature written in Italian in the late Middle Ages. Juxtaposing Christian texts on the liberal arts as well as medieval texts on meditation with Alberti's text on painting demonstrates a continuity in values between Renaissance humanism and medieval spirituality, which helps to comprehend the spiritual weight of artistic activity in the Renaissance. This comparison is not made to imply that Alberti was consciously thinking of particular medieval texts; rather, the comparison aims to bring forth values that are implicit but understated in Alberti's work. Alberti recommends that painters study nature; however, whilst creating a painting, the mind of the artist must retreat from nature itself, and meditate upon the memory's internal image of nature illuminated through study. Finally, Alberti's theory of beauty will be discussed in relation to beauty in the Christian tradition to demonstrate how beauty was a perception of nature in which it appeared ordered and harmonious. This discussion links to the arguments made in the previous chapter by indicating the earlier foundations for attitudes regarding beauty and ornament.

The Liberal Arts in Alberti and the Christian Tradition

Alberti's *De pictura* is not normally considered in light of the Christian tradition of study, so the historical validity and parameters of such an inquiry must be detailed in more depth.[22] Though the comparisons presented in this chapter are not made to suggest a direct linear influence, the plausibility that such ideas might have penetrated into Alberti's intellectual environment must be established. Alberti is usually considered with respect to the culture of Florentine

22 The Christian sources of Alberti have recently been explored by Rinaldo Rinaldi, *"Melancholia Christiana": Studi sulle fonti di Leon Battista Alberti* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2002); Jack M. Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), notes the influence of some of Augustine's ideas on Alberti and his literary circle, 51. Greenstein also considers the presence of Christian values in Alberti. On Alberti's reading of John Chrysostom, see Giovanni Farris, *Un Padre della chiesa imitato da Leon Battista Alberti* (Savona: Sabatelli Editori, 1973).

humanism; by focusing on this context, many studies have broadened our understanding of how Alberti used classical sources, and have considered how his texts may have been read in his local context. However, amid the plethora of intellectual traditions circulating during the Renaissance, other spheres of influence must be considered. In this chapter I propose to read Alberti in light of a wider literary context, noting a range of spiritual themes present in his writings on art that may have been relevant to a broadly literate reader in this period. The case for making such a reading of Alberti is partly made by the existing scholarship on Alberti itself, which, as noted below, has not come to a consensus on the primary intended purpose and audience of Alberti's text. The bilingual editions of Alberti's text—in Latin and Italian—themselves suggest that the text was intended for a range of readers with varying literary educations. There were likewise many later writers in the sixteenth century to read and be influenced by Alberti's text after his book was printed in the sixteenth century, testifying to its continuing relevance. These points encourage a broader reading of Alberti, aiming to articulate how his text might have been interpreted by those outside of his own local literary context. As I propose in this chapter, readers less familiar with Quintilian may have perceived echoes of more widely disseminated spiritual themes in Alberti's text.

As noted, many scholars have posited that in *De pictura*, Alberti places painting among the liberal arts. The liberal arts were a product of Greek and Roman culture and subsequently preserved, though with a different emphasis in the Middle Ages. Typically, the liberal arts comprised the quadrivium and the trivium, the quadrivium being the four numerically based arts (arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy) and the trivium being the three linguistic arts (grammar, rhetoric, logic or dialectic).[23] Naturally, in this scheme, painting was excluded throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages.[24] Alberti refers directly to the liberal arts in several passages in *De pictura*, and modern scholars have thus situated Alberti's text within the classical tradition of the liberal arts.[25] In an early study, Gilbert Creighton suggests a relationship between Alberti's text and the theory of the liberal arts by noting some similarities between the

23 The evolution of the trivium and quadrivium is outlined by David L. Wagner, "The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship," in *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. David L. Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). Also see Paul Abelson, *The Seven Liberal Arts: A Study in Mediaeval Culture* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1965; First published 1906).

24 Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics Part I," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951): 496–527.

25 Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.26, 3.52.

form of *De pictura* (which considers the rudiments, the practice of art, and the practitioner) and the classical isagogic treatise, exemplified by Horace's *Ars Poetica*.[26] Carroll Westfall notes that in *De pictura* "painting is supported by a sound theory based on intellectual principles, and the aim, intention, and method of painting is clearly related to that of any other liberal art," thereby establishing a place for painting in the classical scheme of arts.[27] This, Westfall demonstrates, Alberti accomplishes by showing how painting requires knowledge of geometry and arithmetic to create images according to the laws of linear perspective; also, painting, in keeping with the arts of the trivium, seeks to move men from vice to virtue. The form of Alberti's text has also been scrutinized by Edward Wright who argues that *De pictura* is a pedagogical rather than a theoretical text, which moves from basic principles (the rudiments of perspective and draughtsmanship) to practice, following the example of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.[28] John Spencer notes the similarities between Alberti's view of painting and the revival of the classical art of rhetoric in the fifteenth century,[29] and additionally, Barry Katz has outlined the history of the liberal arts in general to place Alberti's view of painting within the revival of classical, secular learning.[30] Furthermore, to contextualize Alberti's text, it has been read in light of other humanist writers on the liberal arts such as Coluccio Salutati,[31] or other humanist educators within his circle.[32] To the extent that it is possible, some speculations have been made on Alberti's own education, frequently noting the evidence that he studied under the humanist Gasparino Barzizza in Padua.[33] Though scholars agree that the text is primarily peda-

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26 Creighton Gilbert, "Antique Frameworks for Renaissance Art Theory: Alberti and Pino," *Marsyas* 3 (1946).

27 Carroll Westfall, "Painting and the Liberal Arts: Alberti's View," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30 (1969), 494.

28 Edward Wright, "Alberti's 'De Pictura': Its Literary Structure and Purpose," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 47 (1984).

29 John R. Spencer, "Ut Rhetorica Pictura: A Study in Quattrocento Theory of Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20 (1957).

30 M. Barry Katz, *Leon Battista Alberti and the Humanist Theory of the Arts* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977).

31 Westfall, "Painting and the Liberal Arts," 501.

32 For example, the school of Vittorino da Feltre, which will be discussed in more depth below, is explored by Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 127.

33 On Alberti in Padua see Girolamo Mancini, "Nuovi documenti e notizie sulla vita e gli scritti di L.B. Alberti," *Archivio storico italiano*, s. 4, 19 (1887), 201–205. On Barzizza see G. Martellotti, "Barzizza, Gasperino," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–). More recently see Silvana Collodo, "L'Esperienza e

gogical, they have debated the precise audience for the book.[34] Charles Hope insists that *De pictura* was primarily written not as a guide for painters but rather to give humanists a system by which to judge the merits of paintings[35] and, likewise, Michael Baxandall suggests that the Latin version of the text was intended for a particular humanist school rather than for practicing artists.[36]

In the current discussion, some of these questions cannot be addressed: though we may not be certain of the precise audience of the book, there is a general consensus that it was intended to be an educational manual, perhaps written in consultation with practicing painters.[37] It is more theoretical than previous handbooks on painting (thus stressing the intellectual quality of painting), and also the book seems to have had some impact on at least a few artists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, namely Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantegna and Leonardo da Vinci. Without detracting from the usefulness and validity of the above-mentioned studies, in this chapter I will outline some of the Christian principles that were bound to the study of the liberal arts in early Christian and medieval writings and demonstrate how Alberti harmonizes with this tradition. As a text that aims to place painting amongst the liberal arts, *De pictura* consciously evokes classical literature whilst adhering to the spirit of the liberal arts in the Christian tradition as well as contemplation and meditation in general.

The study of the liberal arts and hence the study of nature posed many problems in Christian thought. St. Augustine was the first Christian writer to

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l'opera di Leon Battista Alberti alla luce dei suoi rapporti con la città di Padova," in *La Vita e il Mondo di Leon Battista Alberti: Atti dei convegni internazionali del Comitato Nazionale VI Centenario della Nascita di Leon Battista Alberti, Genova, 19–21 febbraio 2004* (Castello: Leo S. Olschki, 2008), vol. 2. The documents upon which the relationship between Alberti and Barzizza is based are reconsidered by Roberto Norbedo, "Considerazioni Intorno a Battista Alberti e Gasparino Barzizza a Padova (con un documento su Leonardo Salutati)," in *La Vita e il Mondo di Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Milena Aguzzoli et al. (Castello: Leo S. Olschki, 2008).

34 A recent contribution to this problem is offered by D.R. Edward Wright, *Il De Pictura di Leon Battista Alberti e i suoi lettori* (*1435–1600*) (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2010); see also Wright, "Alberti's 'De Pictura,' " 52–53.

35 Charles Hope, "The Structure and Purpose of De Pictura," in *Leon Battista Alberti e il quattrocento: studi in onore di Cecil Grayson e Ernst Gombrich*, ed. Luca Chiavoni, Gianfranco Ferlisi and Maria Vittoria Grassi (Castello: Leo S. Olschki, 2001).

36 Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 127.

37 See the dedication to the Italian edition of *Della pittura* in Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Grayson, 34–35.

discuss the liberal arts in a Christian context[38] and he outlined a theory in which the study of the natural world was a meditation on the beauty of nature as perceived in the mind.[39] He wrote an early work, *De ordine*, specifically on the value of the liberal arts as a whole and one treatise, *De musica*, on the art of music; his most influential thoughts on education are found in his later work *De doctrina Christiana*. Many of his ideas reappear in the works of later medieval authors such as Boethius, Cassiodorus and Isidore of Seville, all of whom wrote influential commentaries on the liberal arts within the Christian faith.[40]

The essential conflict that faced any Christian study of the natural world was the conflict between two fundamental Christian beliefs.[41] The first was the Neoplatonic philosophy that conceptualized the external world as something that tempts and corrupts the sensual part of man's soul, and maintains that only the inner world of man's mind is good. This philosophy, adopted early into Christianity, conflicted with the biblical view of nature, which perceives

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38 Augustine was the first to propose a place for the liberal arts within the system of Christian beliefs (in his earlier works) and later (in *De doctrina Christiana*) he established a method of Christian teaching. On Augustine and the liberal arts, see John-Baptist Reeves, "St. Augustine and Humanism," in *A Monument to Saint Augustine*, ed. M.C. D'Arcy (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930). On Augustine's beliefs on the liberal arts see P. Harte Baker, "Liberal Arts as Philosophical Liberation: St. Augustine's 'De Magistro,'" in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge: Actes du quatrième congrès international de philosophie médiévale* (Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales, 1969) and in the same book, Guy H. Allard, "Arts libéraux et langage chez Saint Augustin." On Augustine's program of education in *De doctrina Christiana*, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography, a New Edition with an Epilogue* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), chapter 23 and also Mark Vessey, introduction to *Augustine and the Disciplines: from Cassiciacum to Confessions*, ed. Karla Pollmann and Mark Vessey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Also see Philip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 6. Augustine's early ideas on the liberal arts surely had an impact on the Middle Ages, though the details of this history are complex. On Augustine's view of the arts and the Italian Renaissance specifically, see Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, 13–14 and more generally, chapters 1 and 4.

39 See, for example, Ronald H. Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 122. Nash emphasizes the fact that, in Augustine, the mind of man brings truth to perception, it does not abstract truth from perception (in the Thomist sense): "truth cannot be derived from sensation; it can only be imposed upon sensation by a mind that is aware of eternal truth."

40 See Wagner, "The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship," 18–25.

41 On the Christian conflict between faith and study in general, see Karl F. Morrison, "Incentives for Studying the Liberal Arts," in *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. David L. Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

the natural world as fundamentally good because it is God's creation.[42] Theoretically, the conflict between these two beliefs would have confronted each Christian artist during the Renaissance who intended to create an image in imitation of the low, imperfect, objects of the natural world, yet wishing to do so in the service of God, and in recognition of the goodness that lay within these objects. Hierarchies of the disciplines in the Middle Ages reflect this conflict by placing those arts that are concerned with creating "products" in a lower category, namely the mechanical arts.[43]

A resolution to this dilemma, posed by Augustine in innumerable contexts and subsequently repeated and reformulated by later authors, was to recognize that man could seek the material world in one of two ways: with bodily desire and lust, or with a spiritual and virtuous love.[44] When the mind turns to a material object out of desire, it lusts after those qualities of a body that are sensual, such as sexual and bodily pleasure.[45] When the mind desires a person in this way, it becomes perversely attached to the parts of the body, seeking

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42 Augustine is better known today for turning away from the natural world than he is for his love of the natural world; however, both views are present in his writings. On the value of perception in Augustine, see Bruce Bubacz, *St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge: A Contemporary Analysis* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1981), chapter 5. The Neoplatonic view is expressed, for example, in Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, (London: Penguin, 1991), 1.6.5: "a Soul becomes ugly—by . . . a descent into body, into Matter." The Biblical view that complicated this idea can be perceived in the Book of Wisdom 13:5. "For from the greatness and beauty of created things, their Creator can be seen and known." For a discussion of Augustine's negotiation of this problem, see Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, particularly chapter 4.

43 George Ovitt, "The Status of the Mechanical Arts in the Medieval Classifications of Learning," *Viator* 14 (1983).

44 Love, in this Augustinian context, refers to a love for the spirit, whereas lust refers to a desire for the body. See for example *On the Trinity*, 9.8.13. "This word is conceived in love, whether it be the word of the creature or the word of the Creator, that is, of a changeable nature or of the unchangeable truth. Therefore, it is conceived either by desire, or love." "Ergo aut cupiditate, aut charitate: non quo non sit amanda creatura; sed si ad Creatorem refertur ille amor, non jam cupiditas, sed charitas eri. Tunc enim est cupiditas, cum propter se amatur creatura." Augustine, *De trinitate* (Migne, *PL*, 042.0967–0968).

45 Augustine speaks of his own sexual desire in these terms. "I sought Thee outside and in my unloveliness fell upon those lovely things that Thou hast made. Thou were with me and I was not with Thee. I was kept from Thee by those things, yet had they not been in Thee, they would not have been at all." Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.27.38. "Et ecce intus eras, et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam; et in ista formosa quae fecisti, deformis irruebam. Mecum eras, et tecum non eram. Ea me tenebant longe a te, quae si in te non essent, non esent." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, *PL* 032.0795).

to consume, to touch and immerse itself in the divided pieces of the physical world.[46] Turning to a material object with spiritual love, however, the mind seeks God in that object.[47] Instead of loving a person for sexual pleasure, for example, it loves the virtue of a person in which God can be perceived, the love of virtue not precluding the body, since the body allows the soul to conform to God's will by pursuing virtuous actions.[48] However, the body should not be loved for itself. Hence, one could be attracted to the bodily world as a whole, or as a part: as a whole, the bodily world was God's perfect creation; in separate parts, the bodily world lacked the reason and purpose of the ordered whole.[49] Every object could be divided from God's order and loved for its bodily self in an ugly manner and similarly all things that at first appear to be ugly could also be seen so that God's presence within them became evident.[50]

This then becomes a fundamental principle for the study of nature in the Christian tradition. Study of the natural world seeks to meditate on the beauty of perceptible objects without becoming attached to these bodies with material lust and to eventually ascend to the intelligible world.[51] To sustain such a

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46 This kind of love should be thought of as a division from God's intended order. Augustine refers to proper love of bodies as a journey to God. See, Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.35.39. "We must make use of this, not with a permanent love and enjoyment of it, but with a transient love and enjoyment of our journey." "Hoc ergo ut nossemus atque possemus, facta est tota pro salute nostra per divinam providentiam dispensatio temporalis, qua debemus uti, non quasi mansoria quadam dilectione atque delectatione, se transitoria potius, tanquam viae, tanquam vehiculorum, vel aliorum quorumlibet instrumentorum, aut si quid congruentius dici potest." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0034).

47 See Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, especially book 1, and *De trinitate*, 8.6.9.

48 See, for example, the discussion of how St. Paul can be loved for the virtue his body performed in Augustine, *De trinitate*, 8.9.13.

49 See Augustine, *On Order* [*De ordine*], ed. and trans. Silvano Borruso (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 2.16.44. "The truly learned are those who, not allowing all the different realities to distract them, attempt their unification into a simple, true, and certain whole. Having done so, they can soar on to divine realities . . ." "Quibus si quisque non cesserit et illa omnia quae per tot disciplinas late varieque diffusa sunt, ad unum quoddam simplex verum certumque redegerit, eruditi nomine dignissimus, non temere iam quaerit illa divina . . ." See also Augustine, *Confessiones*, 10.29.40.

50 This raises the question of how the mind recognized God's order in the material world. The issue of judgment shall be considered in the following chapter; at the moment, it is sufficient to note that the mind could perceive the beauty of God's creations only when it was not attached to bodies as material objects.

51 On Augustine's program of the liberal arts see Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, 90–94; also see Robert J. O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine*

meditation was to gaze upon the whole of God's creation (inasmuch as this could be done), without becoming entangled in the desire for physical parts.

The mechanisms through which Alberti might have inherited these principles of study are complex. It is true that the study of the liberal arts declined in the Middle Ages though the direct study of nature as a path toward God was revived in twelfth-century monastic literature.[52] Regardless of this revival, patristic texts, specifically Augustine's, were available to Alberti's generation for whom they formed a particularly important corpus of literature.[53] The most well known exponent of Augustinian thought in the Renaissance was of course Francesco Petrarca and Augustine remained important for humanists in the fifteenth century.[54] Because of his Ciceronian Latin, Augustine was read by humanists alongside other classical authors[55] and it is partially through his works that Platonic ideas were known and revived before Plato was translated into Latin.[56] The books of Augustine's that were most cited by Marsilio Ficino, for example, indicate the role of Augustine in the revival of Plato: for the main part they consist of his three most popular works (*Confessiones*, *De civitate*

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), chapter 2, on the study of nature. For an example of a later definition of the liberal arts as a liberation from the objects of the material world, see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 75.

52 On the liberal arts in the Middle Ages see Wagner, "The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship," 21–22. On the study of nature in the twelfth century, see Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, 1–48.

53 In general on Augustine as an essential source for Renaissance thought, see Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, chapter 1; Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Augustine in the Early Renaissance," in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome: Edizione di storia e letteratura, 1956).

54 On Francesco Petrarca and Augustine, see, for example, Carol Everhart Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine and the Language of Humanism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, chapter 3. On Augustine and Florentine humanists, see Donatella Coppini and Mariangela Regoliosi, *Gli umanisti e Agostino: codici in mostra* (Florence: Pagliai Polistampa, 2001).

55 See Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Augustine in the Early Renaissance," 1: 364; Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, chapter 1. On Augustine's works and humanists see Coppini and Regoliosi, *Gli umanisti e Agostino*.

56 See Kristeller, "Augustine in the Early Renaissance," 1: 367–370. Also by Kristeller see "The Philosophy of Man in the Italian Renaissance," in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (4 vols, Rome: Edizione di storia e letteratura, 1956), 1: 267 on popular Augustinianism. Also by Kristeller in the same volume see "Lay Religious Traditions and Florentine Platonism," 99–122, in which the religious nature of Ficino's Platonic Academy is emphasized.

Dei, and *De Trinitate*) and his early Neoplatonic writings, including his one finished text on the liberal arts, *De musica*.[57] Alberti, specifically, is known to have cited Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* and *De libero arbitrio*.[58] Augustine's doctrines were often repeated in innumerable permutations and even though there is no evidence that Alberti read Augustine's texts on the liberal arts, *De ordine* and *De musica*, it does not mean that he was not familiar with the ideas found in those texts.[59]

Augustine's direct comments on art reveal that he did not look upon it entirely positively, and therefore it may be at first striking to posit his influence in the realm of art theory (though there is also evidence that Augustine valued aesthetic experiences, as demonstrated by having written *De musica*).[60] Alberti clearly did not make a philological interpretation of Augustine the basis for his theory of art, but there is evidence that Augustine's Christian Neoplatonism was relevant to humanist theories of education, and it is on this basis that I look for relationships between Alberti and the larger tradition of Christian learning; there is also indication that Augustine's thoughts on education were pertinent to Renaissance pedagogues. This question is implicated in the larger issue of the humanist objection to the scholastic learning in general, specifically their alienation of patristic humanism and eloquence.[61] As has

57 See Kristeller, "Augustine in the Early Renaissance," 369.

58 See Roberto Cardini, ed., *Leon Battista Alberti: La biblioteca di un umanista* (Florence: Mandragora 2005), catalogue entry no. 120.

59 Augustine's views on the liberal arts are discussed in *De ordine*, in which he outlines a program for the study of the liberal arts. He planned a series of books on each of the arts, of which *De musica* is the only one to have been completed; *De rhetorica* is partially complete. Augustine's ideas on study are also found in his mature work *De doctrina Christiana*, though the emphasis in this text is not on the liberal arts *per se*. There are five Florentine manuscripts of *De musica* (which was rediscovered in the Renaissance) extant today, including an edition by Niccolò Niccoli, all in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. See Coppini and Regoliosi, *Gli umanisti e Agostino*, catalogue entry no. 15.

60 The question of Augustinian theology and art in the Renaissance has recently been examined with regard to the art of the Augustinian order; see Bourdua and Dunlop, *Art and the Augustinian Orders*, and in this book particularly Anne Dunlop, "Black Humour: The Cappellone at Tolentino." For a close reading of Augustine's aesthetic philosophy and its development, see O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine*.

61 On humanism and scholasticism, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classical, Scholastic and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), chapter 5, and on humanism and the church fathers, chapter 4. See also Concetta Carestia Greenfield, *Humanist and Scholastic Poetics, 1250–1500* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), chapter 10. On the social and intellectual relations between scholastics and humanists, see Jerrold E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of*

been amply discussed, the scholastic approach, and its use of the dialectical method, was not concerned for style, and it was against this method that the humanists framed the *Studia humanitas* (the Trivium) and their emphasis on eloquence and persuasion. The humanist defense of eloquence and poetics made use of Platonic thought, borrowed in part from Augustine.[62] If Alberti, as noted above, places painting among the liberal arts by noting its relationship to rhetoric, then we ought naturally to read Alberti's views on paintings in light of the humanists' use of Augustine and the other patristic authors whose writings were used by humanists in their battles against scholasticism. Augustine's discussion of figurative language, with respect to the interpretation of the Bible, was also used in humanist poetics;[63] humanists also appealed to Augustine's authority to defend the reading of pagan poetry, noting his admiration for Virgil. Another anecdotal indication of Augustine's importance to humanist thinking on the liberal arts is the fact that his rare text, *De musica*, is cited in more than one humanist treatise on the liberal arts, suggesting that its revival in Italy was of interest to humanist educators. Notably, the book is mentioned as being in the library of Vittorino de Feltre, the librarian and schoolmaster of Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, to whom *De pictura* was dedicated (although Michael Baxandall's tantalizing suggestion that Alberti's book was written with Vittorino's famous school in mind cannot be verified).[64] *De musica* was also noted by Battista Guarino in 1459 to advocate the study of the rules of metrics in a text on the liberal arts.[65] Also, Coluccio Salutati frequently relies on the authority of Augustine and Jerome in his defenses of liberal study, as shall be seen below.[66] Though scholars have traditionally emphasized Alberti's secular humanism, more recent studies have fruitfully explored his

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Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), chapter 8.

62 Greenfield, *Humanist and Scholastic Poetics*, chapter 1.

63 Ibid., chapter 1.

64 It is reported to Niccolò Niccoli that Augustine's *De musica* was in Vittorino's library. See W.H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, forward by Eugene F. Rice Jr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 70. On Alberti and Vittorino see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 127–129.

65 Battista Guarino, *A Program of Teaching and Learning*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 274–5.

66 See for example, Coluccio Salutati, "Letters in Defence of Liberal Studies," in *Humanism and Tyranny: Studies in the Italian Trecento*, ed. and trans. Ephraim Emerton (Gloucester, MA: Petter Smith, 1964), 340 and 359. On possible links between Alberti and Salutati, see Norbedo, "Considerazioni intorno a Battista Alberti," 374.

Christian sources, noting amongst others his indebtedness to Augustine; and it also bears mentioning that Alberti earned his doctorate in Canon Law at the University of Bologna.[67]

With the tradition of Christian study in mind, I will present the method of studying nature as described by Alberti. An appropriate relationship of artists to nature is evoked by Alberti by juxtaposing two familiar stories from antiquity of the painters Demetrius and Zeuxis.[68] Alberti's use of two stories that appear in texts by Quintilian and Cicero demonstrates how he forges a relationship between rhetoric and painting, as other scholars noted above have discussed. Alberti appeals to classical sources; however, his citations may also be viewed within the larger humanist project of reviving eloquence for Christian purposes.[69] Paired together, these tales describe a proper method of imitating nature: Alberti counsels artists not to attach themselves to the parts of bodies that they imitate, but rather to gaze upon the whole with the mind's interior eye, so as to perceive the beauty of their order. Alberti's recommendations follow a principle of engaging with the material world, but always maintaining a view of higher purposes.

Alberti begins with the ancient painter Demetrius, who showed too strong an attachment to nature. Quintilian states that Demetrius was "blamed for carrying realism too far, and [was] less concerned about the beauty than the truth (*similitudini*) of his work."[70] Recalling this story, Alberti writes that the "early painter Demetrius failed to obtain the highest praise because he was more curious to make things resemble nature than [to make them]

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67 The Christian sources of Alberti have recently been explored by Rinaldi, "*Melancholia Christiana*"; Farris, *Un Padre della chiesa imitato da Leon Battista Alberti*. Speculations and information on Alberti's program of study at Bologna may be found in David A. Lines, "Leon Battista Alberti e lo studio di Bologna negli anni venti," *La Vita e il Mondo di Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Milena Aguzzoli et al. (Castello: Leo S. Olschki, 2008).

68 I have elsewhere discussed Alberti's take on the Zeuxis and Demetrius stories in order to show how artistic imitation and literary imitation were distinct in that the former implied a spiritual attitude toward nature; see Steven Stowell, "Artistic Devotion: Imitation of Art and Nature in Italian Renaissance Writings on Art," in *Inganno—The Art of Deception: Copies and Fakes from the Renaissance to the 18th Century*, ed. Sharon Gregory, and Sally Hickson (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2012).

69 On the humanism and eloquence within a Christian framework, see Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, chapters 4 and 5.

70 "Nam Demetrius tanquam nimius in ea reprehenditur et fuit similitudini quam pulchritudinis amantior." Quintilian, *Istitutio oratoria*, ed. and trans. H.E. Butler, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966–1969), 12.10.9.

beautiful."[71] Alberti advises, however, that whilst artists should not become attached to nature, their images should nonetheless be attentive to nature, and therefore images invented completely in the mind were inappropriate. He writes that one must not paint from one's "own *ingegno* without having before [one's] eyes or in [one's] mind any exterior aspect/example taken from Nature to follow," thus finding fault with both the extremes of looking only at nature and looking only to the mind.[72]

Alberti presents the story of Zeuxis and the beautiful virgins as an example of an appropriate approach to nature that corrects the faults of Demetrius and the unnamed painter who painted from his or her own mind or *ingegno*. Zeuxis is discussed by both Pliny and Cicero who note that, to paint an image of Helen, the ancient painter selected the best features of five women, since, according to Cicero, "in no single case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in every part."[73] Taken in context with the story of Demetrius, the story illustrates that attention to nature must be kept in balance with attention to a higher principle in the mind: attention to one should not eclipse the other. The beauty found by Zeuxis was therefore the mind's vision of nature.[74] Erwin Panofsky, agreeing with this conclusion, wrote that "beauty is achieved

71 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.55. "ad summam laudem defuit quod similitudinis exprimendae fuerit curiosior quam pulchritudinis." "mancò ad acquistare l'ultima lode che fu curioso di fare cose assimigliate al naturale molto più che vaghe." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.55.

72 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.56. "fugienda est illa consuetudo nonnullorum qui suopte ingenio ad picturae laudem contendunt, nullam naturalem faciem eius rei oculis aut mente coram sequentes." "i quali presuntuosi di suo ingegno, senza avere essemplo alcuno dalla natura quale con occhi o mente sequano." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.56.

73 Pliny, *Naturalis historiae*, ed. E.H. Warmington, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 35.36.64. Zeuxis "held an inspection of maidens . . . and chose five, for the purpose of reproducing . . . the most admirable points in the form of each." "Agragantinis facturus tabulam, quam in templo Iunonis Laciniae publice dicarent, inspexerit virgines eorum nudas et quique elegerit, ut quod in quaque laudatissimum esset pictura redderet." Also, Cicero, *De inventione*, in *De inventione, De optimo genere oratorum, Topica*, ed. and trans. H.M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949; reprint 2006), 2.1. "In no single case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in every part." "Neque enim putavit omnia, quae quaereret ad venustatem, uno se in corpore reperire posse ideo quod nihil simplici in genere omnibus ex partibus perfectum natura expolivit."

74 Historians have taken the Zeuxis story to suggest that it instructs how to find beauty. For example, Wright, "Alberti's 'De Pictura,' " 69; Spencer, "Ut Rhetorica Pictura," 35–36.

not by an external combination of separate parts but by an inner vision that combines individual experiences into a new whole."[75]

The Zeuxis story, however, is an odd choice to exemplify this process, seeing as neither Cicero nor Pliny suggests that Zeuxis' synthesis occurred in his mind. As the story is told in classical texts, one would be inclined to think that Zeuxis copied the chosen part of each figure onto the painting surface, never bothering to hold in his mind the image of all parts merged together. Indeed, when Cicero recounts this story it is to reflect upon his own process of creating a textbook on rhetoric, in which his method suggests cutting and pasting together pieces and parts: "I excerpted what seemed the most suitable precepts from each, and so culled the flower of many minds."[76] If Alberti had wished to discuss how the image of beauty could be found in the mind, he could have chosen many examples from classical antiquity available to him.[77] Presumably such citations, however, did not suggest that the beauty found in the mind was the result of the study of nature. Alberti, like Zeuxis, thus fastens this concept together out of unrelated pieces.

Alberti suggests that this process allows one to find "the idea of beauty," something that "the most expert have difficulty in discerning [and] eludes the ignorant."[78] Art historians have debated the meaning of the phrase "the idea of beauty," believing that it may refer to the Platonic Ideas, implying that Zeuxis is revealing the Idea of woman.[79] More recently it has been suggested that

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75 Panosfky, *Idea*, 64.

76 "Sed, omnius unum in locum coactis scriptoribus, quod quisque commodissime praecipere videbatur excerpsimus et ex variis ingeniis excellentissima quaeque libavimus." Cicero, *De inventione*, 2.1.2.

77 See Panofsky, *Idea*, chapter 2. On Platonic readings of the Zeuxis story, see Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis," 207–210, and Katz, *Alberti and the Humanist Theory of the Arts*, 17.

78 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.56. "pulchritudinis idea quam peritissimi vix discernunt." "quella idea delle bellezze, quale i bene essercitatissimi appena discernono." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.56.

79 The word 'idea' is suggestive as it recalls the Platonic doctrine of the Ideas or the Forms, of which nature is but an imperfect copy. Alberti suggests that the artist must attempt to achieve this idea of beauty through some combination of the mind and nature, and that experience would help the artist to discern it. Does he thus imply that Zeuxis found the idea of the beauty of woman, and that, as such, his painting was a representation of this metaphysical form? Panofsky, *Idea*, 58, has interpreted Alberti's words on the idea of beauty as proof that Alberti was affected by the Platonic movement. However, if there is a Platonic influence, then Alberti has transformed the concept of Idea "into the concept of the 'ideal' . . . [which] stripped the Idea of its metaphysical nobility but at the same time brought it into a beautiful and almost organic conformity with nature: an Idea which is produced by the human mind but, far from being subjective and arbitrary, at the same

Alberti relies on an Aristotelian (or Thomist) philosophy of mind, in which the mind abstracts general principles from specific knowledge.[80] Alberti is, hence, interpreted as a quasi scientist, advocating the disinterested study of nature so as to reveal its underlying structure.[81] Shifting the focus away from Aristotelian or Platonic philosophy, I argue that the idea of beauty is perceived in nature by a mind that maintains a proper, meditative attitude towards natural objects. Therefore, regardless of whether the mind is Platonic or Aristotelian (or Thomist), study reveals the beauty of nature through being a meditative exercise. The word "meditation" may justifiably be used to describe Alberti's process of painting, since it is a word that he himself uses.[82] As in

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time expresses the laws of nature embodied in each object," 65. Most recently, Elisabetto Di Stefano, "Leon Battista Alberti e l'idea della bellezza," in *Leon Battista Alberti: Teorico delle arti*, ed. Arturo Clazona et al. (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007), 36, argues that Alberti's beauty "non è un concetto metafisico innato, ma il frutto dell'esercizio."

80 Jack M. Greenstein, "On Alberti's 'Sign:' Vision and Composition in Quattrocento Painting," *The Art Bulletin* 79 (1997), discusses Aquinas' theory of mind with respect to Alberti's concept of composition.

81 See for example Katz, *Alberti and the Humanist Theory of the Arts*, 19; Summers, *The Judgment of Sense*, which provides a very wide ranging analysis of the presence of Aristotelian concepts on judgment and reason in Renaissance art literature. A less Platonic interpretation is supported by the fact that, in later Renaissance literature on art, the term "idea" is used to describe something or some place that pertains to the mind, and therefore the "idea of beauty" may simply refer to something that could be found only in the mind or soul of the artist (though it is unclear if that mind is Platonic or Aristotelian). It is unclear why Panofsky, *Idea*, did not take Alberti's use of the word in this way, and instead chose to interpret it in light of Platonic philosophy. Examples of such uses of this word by sixteenth-century art theorists may be found in Vincenzo Danti, *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960), 1: 220–221: "et impossibile, quando la mente, composta nell'idea una imagine . . ."; ibid., 1: 263: "lo scultore ha un suo concetto perfettamente composto nell' idea d'una figura da potere farsi di pietra . . ." This definition is supported by the *Vocabulario degli accademici della crusca*, 1st ed. (Venice, 1612), s.v. "idéa": "Diremmo 'Aver che che sia nell' idéa,' cioè nella mente, e nella immaginazione." If these—albeit sixteenth-century—usages reflect Alberti's meaning, what he wrote could be paraphrased "the most expert have difficulty in discerning that beauty of the idea of the mind."

82 In Grayson's translation of the Latin text, "to think" has sometimes been substituted for "to meditate." See Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.62: "Nam omnes qui sua posteris grata et accepta fore opera cupiunt, multo ante meditari opus oportet, quod multa diligentia perfectum reddant." See also 3.55: "Haec igitur omnia picturae studiosus ab ipsa natura excipiet, ac secum ipse assiduo meditabitur quonam pacto quaeque extent, in eaque investigatione continuo oculis et mente persistet."

other meditations, painting becomes a form of spiritual nourishment, benefiting the painter's soul.

Recalling the Christian tradition of the liberal arts outlined above, it appears that the love of the divided parts of the material world is the crime of which Demetrius was guilty. Note that Alberti's censure of Demetrius occurs after he counsels artists to "assiduously meditate upon the appearance of each part."[83] It seems, however, that Alberti meant this only at the level of study, for immediately afterward he writes that "considering all these parts [the painter] should be attentive not only to the likeness of things but also . . . to beauty." Though Alberti clearly believed that the close study of nature was essential for painters, he also believed that attachment to the parts or components of nature was incorrect. Demetrius failed to find beauty not because his paintings looked too much like the natural world, but rather because he had become too attached to these parts for themselves. Alberti uses the word "curious" (*curiosior*/*curioso*) to describe Demetrius' fault, a word loaded with meanings, amongst which was the pursuit of objects for their own sake (rather than for the sake of God). In Augustine's *De musica*, curiosity is a vain love which becomes "the enemy of security and through its vanity, without truth."[84] Besides this early patristic example, curiosity had long been associated with unhealthy interests that were the enemies of ordered and spiritually enlightening contemplation.[85]

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83 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.55. "ac secum ipse assiduo meditabitur quonam pacto quaeque extent, in eaque investigatione continuo oculis et mente persistet." "e con sé stessi molto assiduo le essaminerà in che modo ciascuna stia, e continuo starà in questa investigazione e opera desto con suo occhi e mente." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.55.

84 Augustine, *De musica liber VI: A Critical Edition with a Translation and an Introduction*, ed. and trans. Martin Jacobsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002), 6.13.39. English translations of book 6 are taken from this edition; translations from other parts of *De musica* are prepared by myself in consultation with the Italian translation in *Agostino: Tutti i dialoghi*, ed. Giovanni Catapano, trans. Bettetini (Milan: Bompiani, 2006), and the French translation in *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin, 1er Série: Opuscules. Vol. 7: Dialogues philosophiques IV. La musique—De musica libri sex*, trans. and notes, Guy Finaert, A.A., and F.-J. Thonnard, A.A. (Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer Et Cie, 1947). "Avertit denique amor vanissimae cognitionis talium rerum, et hoc agit sensualibus numeris, quibus insunt quasi regulae quaedam artis imitationes gaudentes; ex his curiositas nascitur ipso curae nomine inimica securitati et vanitate inpos veritatis." *De musica*, in *Agostino: Tutti i dialoghi*, 6.13.39.

85 On curiosity in the context of medieval monastic meditation see Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 82–94: curiosity "constitutes both image 'crowding' . . . and randomness," 82. Thus the fault of Demetrius could be interpreted as a usage of images without order. In the same book, on painting mental images with too many details and curiosity, 209: "We can paint pictures and make statues for ourselves to use in contemplation, . . . [however]

Curiosity was also considered to be the tendency to have a mental inclination toward disorganized thoughts concerned for material or earthly things; Jacopo Passavanti writes that it is a "disordered desire for knowledge . . . experimenting with useless things that are vane and unnecessary."[86] Although in other writings Alberti sometimes uses the word with more positive connotations, it is clear by the context that in *De pictura*, Alberti takes a negative view of curiosity.[87] In this reading, thus, Demetrius had become so close to nature that he could only see parts and not the whole. Note that Alberti follows his criticism of Demetrius by saying that "when the figure of some well-known person is present in a *historia* . . . the face that is known draws the eyes of all spectators, so great is the power of attraction."[88] The inclusion of portraits of people from life, though Alberti recommends they be "beautiful and worthy," seems to contradict the process of Zeuxis, for whom no one maiden was beautiful enough. Alberti further discusses how figures drawn from life captivate viewers more

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curiositas . . . [is] a misplaced desire to remember on each occasion every detail of what we actually saw." Also see Michael Baxandall, "Alberti and Cristoforo Landino," in *Convegno internazionale indetto nel v centenario di Leon Battista Alberti* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974), 150–151. Baxandall describes Landino's use of the word "divoto" as the opposite of "curiositas," which he believes is derived from categorizations in Quattrocento preaching. Baxandall describes the non-curious style as "easily understood, edifies and instructs simple people and avoids elaboration," 150. Finally, see also Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (*Gifford Lectures 1931–1932*), trans. A.H.C. Downes (London, 1936; fasc. ed. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 38–39, on "curiosity" in the tradition of Christian philosophy: "the merely curious man . . . takes all knowledge for his province, every reality falls within it."

86 The *Vocabulario degli accademici della crusca*, 2nd ed. (Venice, 1623), s.v. "curiosità": [from *Specchio di penitenza di Frate Iacopo Passavanti*] "Il primo si è curiosità; che è una disordinata vaghezza di sapere, udendo, e sperimentando cose disutili, vane, e non necessarie."

87 For an example of positive curiosity, see, *De iciarchia*, in *Opere volgari*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Bari: G. Laterza, 1966), 2: 230: "E a questa solo sarà curioso a quale e' sia dedicato, cioè a farsi per sua virtù beato in sé e presso agli altri famoso e immortale." For an example of negative curiosity, see Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, in *Opere volgari*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960), 1: 78: "Né chiamo diligenza, quale par costume piú di tiranni che de' padri, monstrarsi nelle cose troppo curioso."

88 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.56. "nam in historia si adsit facies cogniti alicuius hominis, tametsi aliae nonnullae praestantioris artificii emineant, cognitus tamen vultus omnium spectantium oculos ad se rapit, tantam in se, quod sit a natura sumptum, et gratiam et vim habet." "in una storia sarà uno viso di qualche conosciuto e degno uomo, bene che ivi sieno altre figure di arte molto più che questa perfette e grate, pure quel viso conosciuto a sé imprima trarrà tutti gli occhi di chi la storia raguardi: tanto si vede in sé tiene forza ciò che sia ritratto dalla natura." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.56.

than faces invented by artists, regardless of their beauty.[89] This suggests that the fault of Demetrius' art was not its "realism," but rather his own internal focus as he pursued this realism: his is a curious attachment to the parts and pieces of nature. Again, Passavanti defines curiosity as that which causes men to "go with disorder looking in every place with their head raised," which is the opposite of humility.[90] Though unlike Passavanti, Alberti certainly does not advise artists to keep their eyes lowered in humility, he does want artists to maintain a particular intention whilst studying the natural world to avoid curiosity. Another humanist writing on the liberal arts—Pier Paolo Vergerio in his *Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth* of 1403—would likewise note that an "excessive desire to know and learn is generally joined with a certain disorderly curiosity to investigate."[91] Thus, Alberti's revival of classical eloquence is achieved within a larger context of Christian humanism.

It would be easy to believe that it was Zeuxis who was attached to parts, since he, after all, is said to have selected the beautiful parts of women. The process of looking at many women has led later historians to infer an Aristotelian/Thomist theory of mind from Alberti: he appears to say that only through the study of many can one abstract the principles of the perfect form in the "idea" of the mind. The possible similarity to Aristotelian philosophy shall not be debated here; however, it is equally valid to say that Zeuxis was attached to no one body in particular. In fact, that which he sought was not a body at all, but an "idea of beauty" which other artists believed lay in their minds. Yet Zeuxis realized that beauty "could not be found by his own intuition (*ingenio*/*ingegno*)" alone, nor "in Nature in one body alone."[92] In *De statua*, Alberti writes that Zeuxis studied nature to find "not simply the beauty found in this or that body, but as far as possible, that perfect beauty distributed by Nature,

89 See the citation above.

90 "Il primo grado della umiltá si è: col cuore e col corpo sempre mostrare umiltá, tenendo gli occhi a terra; ed è contario al primo grado della superbia, che si chiama curiositá, per la quale l'uomo disordinatamente va guatando in ogni luogo col capo levato." Passavanti, *Specchio di vera penitenza*, 728.

91 Pier Paolo Vergerio, *The Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 60–61. "Huic autem nimiae sciendi discendique cupiditati conuincta solet esse inordinata quaedam curiositas investigandi."

92 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.56. "ea non modo proprio ingenio non posse, sed ne a natura quidem petita uno posse in corpore reperiri." "non fidandosi pazzamente . . . del suo ingegno, ma perché pensava non potere in uno solo corpo trovare quante bellezze egli ricercav." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.56.

as it were in fixed proportions."[93] In *De pictura*, Alberti suggests that Zeuxis did not become attached to these bodies for themselves, but studied them so that he could "train his hand [so that] anything [it] attempts [to paint] will echo Nature."[94] Training allowed the study of nature to be remembered by the hand, therefore allowing the mind to turn its attention away from nature after study has been completed, so that the mind's interior eye could gaze inwardly during the act of painting. Whereas earlier scholars may have noted that Alberti's Zeuxis returned to his mind to find the idea of beauty, it seems that the spiritual dimension of this inward turn has not been recognized: Zeuxis returned to his mind so that he would not become attached to the bodies with curiosity and so that he would consequently find beauty in his interior contemplation of nature, maintaining his gaze upon the whole instead of the divided parts.

In fact, as noted above, the process of image formation described by Alberti, though formed of classical citations, is not the process described by the citations themselves: Pliny and Cicero do not say that Zeuxis formed the image in his mind, only that he created his image from several different women. It may be argued that the idea described by Alberti is closer to an idea in Christian philosophy. Augustine, for example, writes that the human mind can "combine . . . imaginary visions by taking pieces of recollection from here and there, and, as it were, sewing them together, to see how in this kind the probable differs from the true."[95] These arrangements take place in the mind, Augustine writes, where "it is the province of the superior reason to judge of these corporeal things [with a power that is] above the human

93 "Ergo non unius istius au illius corporis tantum, sed quoad licuit, eximiam a natura pluribus corporius, quasi ratis portionibus dono distributam, pulchritudinem adnotare et mandare litteris prosecuti sumus, illum imitati qui apud Crotoniates . . ." Alberti, *De statua*, in *On Painting and On sculpture: The Latin texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), section 12.

94 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.56. "Qui vero ab ipsa natura omnia suscipere consueverit, is manum ita exercitatam reddet ut semper quicquid conetur naturam ipsam sapiat." "costui renderà sua mano sì essercitata che sempre qualunque cosa farà parrà tratta dal naturale." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.56.

95 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 12.2.2. "fictas etiam visiones, hinc atque inde recordata quaelibet sumendo et quasi assuendo, componere, inspicere, quemadmodum in hoc rerum genere quae verisimilia sunt discernantur a veris, non spiritualius, sed ipsis corporalibus: haec atque hujusmodi quamvis in sensibilibus, atque in eis quae inde animus per sensum corporis traxit agantur atque versentur, non sunt tamen rationis expertia, nec hominibus percoribusque communia. Sed sublimioris rationis est judicare de istis corporalibus secundum rationes incorporales et sempriternas." Augustine, *De trinitate* (Migne, *PL*, 042.0999).

mind . . . yet . . . subjoined [to it]."[96] Hence, when the mind sews together images and "judges of these corporeal things," it is making use of an "eternal reason" that is subjoined to the mind, thus engaging the part of the soul closest to God. Though obviously Augustine's ideas were indebted to Neoplatonism, turning inward and appealing to higher faculties implied a spiritual and devotional practice since it required a meditative retreat from the natural world to ensure that the mind was not governed by the body.

Study and Composition: Painting as a Form of Meditation

As conveyed in the Zeuxis story, painting requires both the study and imitation of nature. Accordingly, Alberti begins his treatise with the application of perspective to painting, giving the painter some fundamental numerical principles (engaging the arts of the quadrivium) with which to understand the perception of space. Juxtaposing the understanding of the mind with the objects of the visible world, Alberti presents the general techniques of perspective as the tools by which the mind can obtain a mathematical understanding of the "cruder" objects of the visible world. The perspectival description of painting will resemble the art of mathematics, Alberti writes, which "measures the shapes and forms of things in the mind alone and divorced entirely from matter."[97] However, despite the fact that this math is "in the mind alone," he will speak of "things that are visible," and as such, lower and "cruder."[98]

The dichotomy between the nobility of number and the imperfection of material reality stems from the Pythagoreans, and is obviously a major feature of Platonic philosophy.[99] This attitude is also embedded in the Christian interpretation of the liberal arts in which the contemplation of number, and

96 Ibid.

97 Alberti, *On Painting*, 1.1. "Illi enim solo ingenio, omni seiuncta materia, species et formas rerum metiuntur." "Quelli col solo ingegno, separata ogni matera, mesurano le forme delle cose." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 1.1.

98 Alberti, *On Painting*, 1.1. "Nos vero, quod sub aspectu rem positam esse volumus, pinguiore idcirco, ut aiunt, Minerva scribendo utemur". "Noi, perché vogliamo le cose essere poste da vedere, per questo useremo quanto dicono più grassa Minerva." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 1.1. See Spencer, "Ut Rhetorica Pictura," 35, and also Martin Kemp, introduction to *On Painting*, by Leon Battista Alberti, trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Penguin, 2004), 12, for a discussion of the meaning of this phrase. See Greenstein, "On Alberti's 'Sign,' " 681, where this phrase is discussed with reference to scholasticism.

99 See Wagner, "The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship," 3–4.

its presence in nature, becomes a means of approaching God.[100] At the beginning of this tradition, Augustine writes that by creating the mathematical arts, "reason stepped into the domain of the eyes," finding that "nothing but beauty pleased it: and in beauty, forms [pleased it], and in forms, proportions, and within proportion, number."[101] The mind, however, found the visible world "far inferior [to that which lay in the mind]. Nothing real stood in comparison with what the mind could see."[102] Therefore the mathematical arts allow the mind to contemplate the beauty of number in nature, a belief that is supported by Scripture, which asserts that God "arranged all things by measure and number and weight" (Wisdom, 11:20).[103] The liberal artist is tasked with perceiving the measure of nature: to go from "corporeal and spiritual but changeable numbers" to "the knowledge of unchangeable numbers which are already in unchangeable truth itself."[104] Alberti is in harmony with these principles when he discusses Zeuxis in his treatise *De statua*, suggesting that Zeuxis studied

100 Augustine, *On Order* [*De ordine*], 2.2.13.39. "From here, reason wanted to take off into the heights of contemplation of divine things . . . It sought that beauty which can exclusively be attained in simplicity without bodily eyes, but the senses stood in the way. Therefore it slowly turned its attention towards those same senses." "Hinc se illa ratio ad ipsarum divinarum beatissimam contemplationem rapere voluit . . . Desiderabat enim pulchritudinem, quam sola et simplex posset sine istis oculis intueri; ipediebatur a sensibus. Itaque in eos ipsos paululum aciem torsit." Westfall, "Painting and the Liberal Arts," 495, briefly discusses how the liberal arts were concerned with conveying knowledge revealed by God.

101 Augustine, *On Order* [*De ordine*], 2.2.15.42. "Hinc est profecta in oculorum opes et terram caelumque collustrans, sensit nihil aliud quam pulchritudinem sibi placere, et in pulchritudine figuras, et in figuris dimensiones, in dimensionibus numeros."

102 Ibid., 2.2.15.42. "Longe deteriorem invenit et nulla ex parte quod viderent oculi cum eo quo mens cerneret comparandum."

103 "sed omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti." (Wisdom 11:21, Latin vulgate).

104 Augustine, *The Retractions*, trans. Sister Mary Inez Bogan (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 45. "quorum ipse sextus maxime innotuit, quoniam res in eo digna cognitione versatur, quomodo a corporalibus et spiritualibus, sed mutabilibus numeris, perveniatur ad immutabiles numeros, qui jam sunt in ipsa immutabili veritate, et sic invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciantur." Augustine, *Retractiones* (Migne, PL, 032.0600–0601). For example, a liberal artist might first see a person (to see a corporeal form with certain finite measurements), then understand the numerical proportions of this person (to see spiritual numbers, because they are perceived by the intellect, yet mutable, because they are the numbers that pertain to a particular body), and finally, understand how these proportions conform or do not conform to perfection (numbers that are not seen exteriorly, but are perceived interiorly—the immutable Truth). Augustine's discussion of this concept with respect to the liberal arts lay mostly in the discussion of measure in music, but also extended to architecture.

not the beautiful parts of bodies, but rather the proportions structuring these bodies, implying that the idea of beauty in *De pictura* is actually the beauty of measure, a belief consonant with the Christian tradition of the liberal arts.[105]

The importance of measure in the liberal arts is not unique to Augustine. In later Christian treatises on the liberal arts, math enables divine contemplation: Cassiodorus writes that the contemplation of mathematics "in frequent meditation . . . sharpen[s] our understanding and . . . lead[s] us . . . to glorious theoretical contemplation."[106] Nearer to Alberti's time, these ideas are expressed in other humanist texts on education. In Leonardo Bruni's *The Study of Literature* from c. 1422–29, the Florentine chancellor argues that the beauty of rhythm in poetry inspires a "lifting up of the soul" because the soul is "number and . . . harmony."[107] The humanist Coluccio Salutati, defending the quadrivium as tools that facilitate the contemplation of divinity, writes that "things pertaining to divinity [will] present themselves to the beginner in theology who has carefully studied geometry."[108] It is worth mentioning that Salutati refers to Augustine as well as Jerome throughout his writings on the liberal arts, again demonstrating a sympathy between early humanist beliefs on education and the Latin Fathers.[109]

The emphasis on the perception of number implied that liberal artists were required to do more than simply imitate nature. In fact, Augustine declared that imitation was insufficient grounds for including an activity amongst the liberal arts, though it was a component of many arts.[110] For example, when a

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105 Alberti, *De statua*, section 12.

106 Cassiodorus Senator, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, trans. Leslie Webber Jones (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1966), 179.

107 Leonardo Bruni, *The Study of Literature*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 116–117. "At enim, si inter ista chorus poetica illa decantet 'Primo dierum omnium' vel 'Iste Confessor' vel 'Ut queant laxis resonare fibris,' cuius usque adeo mens humi depressa est, ut non elevetur animus et quasi suscitetur? Ex quo opinati sunt quidam antiquorum animum nostrum harmoniam esse et numerum . . ."

108 Salutati, "Letters in Defence of Liberal Studies," 365.

109 It is perhaps not a coincidence that the *Divina proportione* by Luca Pacioli cites Augustine's commentary on Wisdom, 11:21 in its first pages. See Luca Pacioli, *Divina porportione*, in *Scritti d'arte del cinquecento*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1973) 1: 62.

110 "At si omnis imitatio ars est, et ars omnis ratio; omnis imitatio ratio: ratione autem non utitur irrationale animal; non igitur habet artem: habet autem imitatione; non est igiture ars imitatio." Augustine, *De musica*, 1.4.6. "But if every imitation is art, and every art is reason, then every imitation is reason. However the irrational animal does not have reason, therefore it does not possess art, even if it can imitate, therefore, art is not imitation." Author's translations, see note 84.

bird sings, it is perceived to be beautiful by man because the bird's song, by nature, follows the laws of music.[111] The liberal art of music, however, does not consist in imitating the bird's song (imitating nature), since without understanding the imitator is not a liberal artist.[112] Therefore, one may be able to imitate nature, but if the imitator does not also "understand" that imitation, he or she is not practicing a liberal art; thus the liberal arts are more concerned with the process of the artist rather than his or her products. The evidence of one's understanding was, in part, the ability to speak about one's understanding.[113]

Such an understanding of the liberal arts is compatible with Alberti's view of the painter and in fact appears in other humanist treatises written at roughly the same time.[114] The painter imitates nature, but the painter is only

111 "M. Responde igitur, utrum tibi videatur bene modulari vocem luscinia verna parte anni: nam et numerosus est et suavissimus ille cantus, et, nisi fallor, tempori congruit . . . Numquidnam liberalis huius disciplinae perita est? D. Non." Augustine, *De musica*, 1.4.5. "M. Tell me, does it seem to you that the nightingale modulates well its voice in spring? This song follows the laws of numbers, and is very sweet, and, if I am not mistaken, well suited to the season . . . Maybe the nightingale is an expert in this liberal discipline? D. No." Author's translation, see note 84.

112 "Non adimet quidem: nec ego affirmo eos, a quibus organa ista tractantur, omnes carere scientia, sed non habere omnes dico." Augustine, *De musica*, 1.4.7. "I do not say that those who play these musical instruments are all deprived of science, but I say that not all of them have it." Author's translation, see note 84. Likewise, an architect was superior to an animal, which may by nature build shelters with beautiful proportions, "not for making things according to measure but for knowing what measure is." "Non ergo numerosa faciendo, sed numeros cognoscendo melior sum." Augustine, *De ordine*, 2.2.19.49.

113 "Dic mihi ergo, quaeso te; nonne tales tibi omnes videntur, qualis illa luscinia est, qui sensu quodam ducti bene canunt, hoc est numerose id faciunt ac suaviter, quamvis in terrogati de ipsis numeris, vel de intervallis acutarum graviumque vocum, respondere non possint?" Augustine, *De musica*, 1.4.5. "does it not seem to you that . . . there are those who sing sweetly and follow the laws of numbers, but interrogating them about these same numbers or about the intervals of sounds acute and grave, are not able to respond?" Author's translation, see note 84. Understanding demonstrated through speech is a concept that appears in *De ordine*: "How do we know? From our adapting tongue to palate and teeth so as to produce words." "Ex eo quod nos quoque certis dimensionibus linguam dentibus et palato accommodamus, ut ex ore litterae ac verba prorumpant, nec tamen cogitamus cum lquimur quo motu oris id facere debeamus." Augustine, *De ordine*, 2.2.18.49.

114 See, for example, Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 124. Here, Baxandall discusses Leonardo Bruni's *De interpretatione recta*, in which the author notes that correct judgment, or understanding, of an art can be achieved without "executive ability" in that art. In Baxandall's words, "one could appreciate painting or music without being onself a good painter or singer."

a liberal artist if he or she understands the nature he or she imitates.[115] Alberti states that to imitate nature perfectly is not the sole work of a liberal artist and chastises those who imitate the beautiful works of others: "There are some who emulate the work of other painters and thereby aspire to fame."[116] These painters are "gravely mistaken" because their works are simply a mechanical copying of nature.[117] For Alberti, therefore, the process is more important than the product: given two identical paintings, only the painting made with understanding is the product of a liberal art. Likewise, Alberti notes that understanding can be demonstrated by the ability to speak and explain one's art. A painter is good if "he knows well the borderlines of surfaces," which few do, because "if they are asked what they are attempting to do on the surface they are painting, they can answer more correctly about everything else than about what in this sense they are doing."[118]

Given that it is a truism to state that artists studied the numbers of nature conscious that it was God's creation,[119] the discussion of Alberti's views on the perception of number in nature will likely sound familiar to many, even if the similarity to the Christian tradition of the liberal arts has not been previously emphasized in scholarly literature.[120] However, when turning from study to composition, the meditative qualities of painting are more clearly perceived.

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115 Westfall, "Painting and the Liberal Arts," 493, brings up the point that Alberti distinguishes between the liberal art of painting and the majority of painters who do not in fact practice painting as a liberal art. He attributes this distinction to Cicero's (recently rediscovered) *Orator*.

116 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.58. "Sunt qui aliorum pictorum opera aemulentur, atque in ea re sibi laudem quaerant; . . . At pictores maximo in errore versantur." "Alcuni ritranno figure d'altri pittori . . . Ma certo i nostri pittori saranno in grandi errori." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.58.

117 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.58.

118 Alberti, *On Painting*, 1.12. "Nam si rogentur quid in ea quam tingunt superficie conentur assequi, omnia rectius possunt quam quid ita studeant respondere." "e domandando in su quella quale e' tingono superficie che cosa essi cercano di fare, diranti ogni altra cosa più a proposito di quello di che tu domandi." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 1.12.

119 On the importance of number in Renaissance architecture, see Rudolph Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, 3rd ed. (London: A. Tiranti, 1962).

120 It is briefly noted by Katz, *Alberti and the Humanist Theory of the Arts*, 31. There has been a tension between Alberti's own insistence on the importance of number and the interpretations of later scholars, for example Baxandall, *Giotto and the Ortators*, and André Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982), 98, who correlate Alberti's concept of the liberal arts specifically to the arts of rhetoric or poetry. By appealing to this Christian tradition in which language engages numeric principles, part of this tension can be resolved.

Alberti indicates that the painter must maintain a certain meditative quality of mind while at work, which recalls some Christian principles of meditation. The emphasis on the active study of nature in *De pictura* may seem to refute the possibility that painting can be a meditative, inward activity. However, by repeatedly instructing painters to memorize his or her study, Alberti suggests that the observation of nature should be restricted to study and not to composition.[121] Artists should "meditate upon the appearance of each part [of an object] . . . with both eye and mind."[122] They will study "the proportions of members" and "fix in their minds the things they have learned"[123] and also "commit to memory all the differences that can exist in . . . members."[124] Thus, through study, the mind of the painter understands and memorizes the lower objects of nature, so that he "can represent with his hand what he has understood with his mind."[125] The importance of meditating and memorizing one's study is an indication that, eventually, the mind of the artist must turn away from nature in order to practice art.[126] When creating the composition for a *historia*, Alberti writes that the painter should "ponder at some length on the order and the means by which the composition might best be done."[127]

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121 On memorization, see Wright, "Alberti's 'De Pictura,'" 59–61, where it is related to a Quintilian system.

122 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.55. "Haei igitur omnia picturae studiosus ab ipsa natura excipiet, ac secum ipse assiduo meditabitur quonam pacto quaeque extent, in eaque investiagtione continuo oculis et mente persistet." "e con sé stessi molto assiduo le essaminerà in che modo ciascuna stia, e continuo starà in questa investigazione e opera desto con suo occhi e mente." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.55.

123 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.36. "Idcirco laborem hunc studiosi suscipiant, ut quantum in symmetria memborum recognoscenda studii et operae posuerint, tantum sii ad eas res quas didicerint memoria firmandas profuisse intelligant." "tenere a mente quello che piglino dalla natura, quanto a riconoscerle aranno posto suo studio e opera." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.36.

124 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.55. "in membis possint esse differentias memoriae commendent." "poi imparino ciascuna forma distinta di ciascuno membro, e mandino a mente." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.55.

125 Alberti, *On Painting*, 1.24. "Sequitur ut pictorem instituamus quemadmodum quae mente conceperit ea manu imitari queat." "Seguita ad istituire il pittore in che modo possa seguire colla mano quanto arà coll'ingegno compreso." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 1.24.

126 See Westfall, "Painting and the Liberal Arts," 497, on drawing without recourse to the object in Alberti's *Elementa picturae*.

127 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.61. "Caeterum cum historiam picturi sumus, prius diutius excogitabimus quonam ordine et quibus modis eam componere pulcherrimum sit." "E quando

In composition, therefore, the mind will retreat from nature, and in fact the mind can only form good compositions if it does not allow itself to become attached to physical materials; the mind must understand and imitate bodies, but never allow itself to care for bodies in themselves. Augustine clearly states that liberal artists face this paradoxical situation, writing that the mind, desiring to find God by studying the liberal arts, "turned its attention towards [the senses]. These, staking a claim for the possession of truth, distracted it from its pursuit of higher things."[128] However, knowledge of higher things is "forbidden to the slaves of pleasure, or to those hankering after perishing things."[129] More simply, Augustine advises here against being distracted from the higher purpose of contemplating God whilst studying the natural world.[130] In Alberti, this view is reflected in the stories of Demetrius and Zeuxis, in which unhealthy curiosity degraded Demetrius' works whilst Zeuxis avoided such material seduction by allowing his study to be memorized in his body. Another story recounted by Alberti reaffirms this principle: out of a desire for his "work to be completely free from all defect and highly polished," the ancient artist Protegonese wore out his work "before it was finished," thus demonstrating an improper attention to the physical work he was producing.[131] In contrast,

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aremo a dipignere storia, prima fra noi molto penseremo qual modo e quale ordine in quella sia bellissima." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61.

128 Augustine, *De ordine*, 2.2.14.39. "Desiderabat enim pulchritudinem, quam sola et simplex posset sine istis oculis intueri; impediebatur a sensibus. Itaque in eos ipsos paululum aciem torsi, qui veritatem sese habere clamantes."

129 Ibid., 2.2.16.44. "Quisquis autem vel adhuc servus cupiditatum, et inhians rebus pereuntibus."

130 In Renaissance writings on the study of the liberal arts, some traces of this sentiment may be perceived in attitudes toward the body and material pleasures, whereby students are not entirely forbidden from material pleasures, though they must experience them with moderation. For example, see Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who wrote that "we ought to chasten the body and hold in check its violent urges as if it were a savage beast, curbing [it] with the rein of reason." Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *The Education of Boys*, in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 152–153. "Contra servandum est, nam castigare et compescere eius impetus velut immanem quandam beluam oportet et eius adversus animam temerarios motus rationis habena cohibere." Similar parallels can be found in humanist defences of pagan poetry. Citing Augustine and Jerome, for instance, Salutati writes that the study of poetry is acceptable only if one does not find rest in it. That is, one should not become so immersed in the study of poetry that one fails to carry it forward to God. See Emerton's introduction to Salutati, "Letters in Defence of Liberal Studies," 311.

131 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.61. "[Sed vitanda est superflua illa, ut ita loquar, superstitio eorum qui,] dum omni vitio sua penitus carere et nimis polita esse volunt, prius contritum

Demetrius was a slave to likeness rather than to beauty, and hence too interested in nature, and not interested enough in the object he was creating. In both of these stories the mind is too attached to matter: in the first, the material of his own creation, and in the second, the material he is imitating.

The study of nature was not a goal in itself, and if study created understanding, it may be said that this was only useful in that it provided a "mental light" to guide the artist as she or he painted. Alberti uses a metaphor that may be paraphrased "the mind forming an image is an object moving in space" to describe the mind's process of forming an image. The understanding of the mind is what guides the artist in his or her mental movement toward the image he or she is forming. Alberti writes that without understanding you "will never be a good painter [because] it is useless to draw the bow, unless you have a target at which to aim the arrow."[132] Mental understanding is here metaphorically something that makes visible that which the artist moves toward: understanding makes the target visible, and is also in a certain sense the thing one wishes to approach. Without understanding, an artist will "wander, fearful and virtually sightless, in the darkness of his error, like the blind man with his stick, [the artist] with [his] brush [will] test and investigate unknown paths and exits."[133] Understanding is a mental light that allows one to move in an intended direction. Such a metaphor is likely introduced into Alberti's writings from the long Christian tradition in which the human mind is spoken of as having been "illuminated" by God.[134]

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opus vetustate efficiunt quam absolutum sit." "[ma conviensi fuggire quella decimaggine di coloro, i quali] volendo ad ogni cosa manchi ogni vizio e tutto essere troppo pulito, prima in loro mani diventa l'opera vecchia e sucida che finita." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61.

132 Alberti, *On Painting*, 1.23. "Frustra enim arcu contenditur, nisi quo sagittam dirigas destinatum habeas." "Indarno si tira l'arco ove non hai da dirizzare la saetta." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 1.23.

133 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.59. "dumque inter eas erroris tenebras versantur, meticulosi ac veluti obcaecati, penniculo, ut caecus bacillo, ignotas vias et exitus praetentant ac perquirunt." "e mentre che s'avolgerà fra quelle tenebre d'errori e quasi come il cieco con sua bacchetta, così lui con suo pennello tasterà questa e quest'altra via." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.59.

134 This theme is particularly strong in Augustine's writings; see, Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, chapter 4. Augustine frequently referred to the illumination of the mind, writing that "those who have been well instructed in the liberal disciplines . . . contemplate . . . the entire face of truth, whose splendour . . . in those arts is already clear." "Tales sunt, qui bene disciplinis liberalibus eruditi . . . non tamen contenti sunt nec se tenet, done totam faciem veritatis, cuius quidam in illis artibus splendor iam subrutilat,

The study that produces understanding allows for appropriate speed in painting. In the dark mental space deprived of understanding, one proceeds "slowly and lingeringly."[135] On the other hand, the illuminated mental space allows artists to "become faster workers" and to "[think] out clearly in their own minds."[136] Appropriate speed of mental movement, in turn, prevents the mind from making either of the mistakes mentioned above: paying too much or too little attention to nature or art. Hence "in carrying out our work we will employ the necessary diligence combined with speed, so that tedium does not prevent us from going on [paying too much attention to either art or Nature], nor eagerness to complete make us rush the job [a desire for matter, a lack of understanding]."[137]

The mind has a natural inclination to be guided, not by the light of understanding, but by the passions of the soul. Alberti writes that artists can become excited by a mind full of "great enthusiasm and . . . ardor," or even "lust" (*cupiditas/cupidità*), though once the passion has subsided the artist will be left with "cooled" thoughts unable to maintain their attention, thereby creating "rough and unfinished" works.[138] With these words Alberti recalls the humoral theory

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latissime atque plenissime inteuantur." Augustine, *Soliloqui*, in *Agostino: Tutti i dialoghi*, ed. Giovanni Catapano, Italian trans. Maria Bettetini (Milan: Bompiani, 2006), 2.20.35.

135 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.59. "sunt quod lente et morose eam rem tentent quam non prius menti suae studio." "lento e temoroso tenterà quelle cose quale non arà prima fatte alla sua mente." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.59.

136 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.59. "Tum etiam dum ex composito agere omnia consueverimus, fit ut Asclepiodoro longe promptiores artifices reddamur, quem quidem omnium velocissimum pingendo fuisse ferunt . . . [Si qui vero sunt pigri artifices, hi profecto idcirco ita sunt quod lente et morose eam rem tentent quam] non prius menti suae studio perspicuam effecere." "E ancora quando saremo usati a fare nulla senza prima avere ordinato, interveracci che molto più che Asclipiodoro saremo pittori velocissimi . . . [E se alcuno si troverà pigro artefice . . .] tenterà quelle cose quale non arà prima fatte alla sua mente conosciute e chiare." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.59.

137 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.61. "In opere vero perficiendo eam diligentiam adhibebimus quae sit coniuncta celeritati agendi, quam neque taedium a prosequendo deterreat, neque cupiditas perficiendi praecipitet." "aremo quella prestezza di fare, congiunta con diligenza, quale a noi non dia fastidio o tedio lavorando, e fuggiremo quella cupidità di finire le cose quale ci facci abboracciare il lavoro." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61. The issue of speed of creation has been discussed with respect to Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*; see Marvin Trachtenberg, "Building Outside Time in Alberti's 'De re aedificatoria,' " *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 48 (2005).

138 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.61. "dum ardor ille ingenii deferbuit, inchoatum ac rude opus deserunt, novaque cupiditate aliud agendi ad novissima sese conferunt." "con ardentissimo studio darsi a qualche opera, poi freddato quello ardore d'ingegno, lassano l'opera

of the body, in which the excess of one humor or another causes excessive heat or coolness, which consequently distracts the mind. This is also consistent with Augustine's thoughts on the liberal arts in which "the love of being active towards the approaching reactions of its body distracts the soul from the contemplation of things eternal and diverts its attention by anxious desire for sensual pleasure."[139] Such opinions regarding the humors and their ability to distract from study are echoed again by Alberti in passages about the education of children from *Della famiglia*. Noting that "the phlegmatic are inclined to sloth; the melancholy are timid and suspicious," Alberti counsels fathers to "diligently guide" their children away from these bodily inclinations with "the exact sciences, or elegant and fine letters and doctrine."[140] In order to maintain a proper balance in the mind, Alberti suggests that painters "interrupt [their] work and refresh [their] minds."[141] Interruption will free the mind from these bodily bonds, and Alberti suggests that looking at one's work in "a mirror will be an excellent guide," if one becomes too attached to the physical work of art, such that he or she loses judgment.[142] These passages demonstrate how the good painter must maintain a mental balance by neither gravitating too much toward the object of study, the object of creation, nor one's own bodily passions. Within these passages, we also perceive an attitude toward the materiality of art that is related to the questions of ornament and materiality discussed in the previous chapter: in both cases we observe art theorists navigating the artist's problematic engagement with matter.

Thus, Alberti counsels the painter to return to the illuminated, interior space of the mind whilst painting. Notably, Alberti suggests that a painter will lose

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cominciata e rozza e con nuova cupidità si danno a nuove cose." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61.

139 Augustine, *De musica*, trans. Jacobsson, 6.13.39. "Amor igitur agendi adversus succedentes passiones corporis sui avertiti animam a contemplatione aeternorum, sensibilis voluptatis cura eius avocan intentionem." Augustine, *De musica*, 6.13.39.

140 Leon Battista Alberti, *The Albertis of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's 'Della Famiglia'*, trans. Guido A. Guarino (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971), 80. "ne' flemmatici sta una desidia e pigrizia, e sono e' malenconici quasi piú che gli altri timidi e sospettosi." "sarà da seguire in loro con ogni industria dove la natura la dirizza, alle scienze suttilissime, alle lettere e dottrine elegantissime e prestantissime." Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 63.

141 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.61. "Interlaxandus interdum negotii labor est recreandusque animus." "si conviene interlassare la fatica del lavorare ricreando l'animo." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61.

142 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.46. "Erit quidem ad eam rem cognoscendam iudex optimus speculum." "E saratti a ciò conoscere buono giudice lo specchio." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.46.

awareness of the outside world. The mind held in the proper state of attention whilst painting will not feel the passing of time at all; Alberti writes, "whenever I devote myself to painting for pleasure . . . I persevere with such pleasure in finishing my work that I can hardly believe later on that three or even four hours have gone by."[143] A similar statement is made in Alberti's book, *Profugiorum ad erumna libri* (Flight from tribulation, 1441/3), a dialogue in which several interlocutors discuss how to achieve inner peacefulness. One interlocutor describes how the sensation of timelessness is produced by studies which lead the mind away from material and worldly distractions. The result of this interior study abstracts the soul from all sense (*astratto da ogni altro senso*):

> it does not occur rarely that I, whilst in some place where there are some invidious people, insolent and bold, of whom more than one tries to shoot various stinging words or other stimuli at me. . . . [However, I am] so occupied by my other investigations, and also part so inclined not to care for them any more than were they that crow that saluted Caesar . . . that I hear nothing, see nothing, nor feel anything other than myself; I reason with myself, I repeat my studies . . . Therefore, just think of the souls that are more full of marvelous investigations than mine . . . That mathematician Archimedes, who defended his country with various and never seen before machines and war instruments . . . who was found [by his enemies] investigating geometric things which he designed on the pavement of his house, and finding him with his soul so occupied and so abstracted from any other sense that the noise of the arms, the wailing of the citizens . . . did not move him. It is a thing certainly marvelous that such noise, such clouds of smoke and powder did not take him from his investigations and mathematical reasonings . . .[144]

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143 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.28. "Si quando me animi voluptatis causa ad pingendum confero, quod facio sane persaepius cum ab aliis negotiis otium suppeditat, tanta cum voluptate in opere perficiendo insisto ut tertiam et quartam quoque horam elapsam esse postea vix possim credere." "ivi con tanta voluttà sto fermo al lavoro, che spesso mi maraviglio così avere passate tre o quattro ore." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.28.

144 "a me non rarissimo intervenne ch'io, posto in mezzo dove erano alcui invidi, procaci e temulenti, de'quali più d'uno con vari stimoli e aculei di parole per incitarmi ad ira di qua e di qua mi saettavano, stetti parti sì occupato ad altre mie investigazioni, parte ancora sì disposto a nulla curarli più che se fussero quel corvo che salutava Cesare . . . che io nulla udiva, nulla vedea, nulla sentiva altri che me stessi; meco ragionava, meco repetea miei studii e vigilie, e a me stessi intanto promettea buona grazia e posterità. Quinci pensate voi quali siano gli animi più pieni che 'l mio di maravigliose investigazioni. Marco Marcello presso a Siracuse comandò a' suoi armati che in tanto eccidio di sì nobile terra

Alberti thus evokes the soul's abstractedness from the outer world as a kind of meditation produced by "investigations" and "studies." The act of designing geometrical figures on the ground, though implying an attention to the outside world, appears to occur automatically, whilst the real attention of the soul is turned inwards. Likewise, the painter—who similarly engages with the outer world of paints, canvases and designing, not to mention studying, measuring, and drawing nature—has his or her attention turned inwards whilst painting, allowing him- or herself to be guided, not by attention to nature, not by attention to his or her own handwork, and not by passions, but by the inner light of understanding.

Although in this passage Alberti recalls pagan literature, he is also casting the experience of intellectual contemplation in the light of meditation by invoking some late medieval motifs. The trope of spiteful persecutions and insults which distract the mind appears frequently in devotional literature. For instance, in the *Specchio dei xxv gradi* (Mirror of twenty-five grades), Saint Bonaventure writes that one must "sustain all the persecutions of the world,"[145] later writing that peace will be brought to your soul through "the precious operations of vigils," during which one should offer "to God your orations . . . with the fervor of devotion."[146] Likewise, the soul's peace comes from "abstaining" from "all the sentiments of the body such that nothing at all will you see, hear or touch."[147] Finally, when celebrating the divine offices you should remain "so

servassero quello Achimede matematico, quale difendendo la patria sua con varie e in prima non vedute macchine e instrumenti bellici, aveva una e un'altra volta perturbato ogni ordine suo e rotto l'impeto di tanta sua ossidione ed espugnazione. Trovoronlo investigare cose geometrice quale e' disegnava in sul pavimento in casa sua; e trovoronlo sì occupato coll'animo e tanto astratto da ogni altro senso che lo strepito delle armi, el gemito de' cittadini quali cadeano sotto le ferite, le strida delle moltitudine quali periano oppressi dalle fiamme e dalle ruine de' tetti e de' tempii, nulla el commoveano. Cosa per certo mirabile che tanto fracasso, tanta caligine del fumo e del polverio non lo stogliesse da questa una sua investigazione e ragione matematica a quale gli era tanto occupato e adiudicato." Leon Battista Alberti, *Profugiorum ab erumna libri*, ed. Giovanni Ponte (Genova: Tilgher-Genova, 1988), 116–117.

145 "che per amore dell'Altissimo tu sostenga equalmente tutte le persecuzioni del mondo. Anzi, se possibile è, recevendole tutte per desiderio." Bonaventure, *Lo Specchio dei xxv gradi*, 208.

146 "Che se tu non possiedi a ogni tempo la graziosa e santa solitudine, abbi la preziosa operazione delle vigilie, offerendo sempre in esse a Dio le tue orazioni con attenzione delle parole, con fervore di devozione." Ibid., 210.

147 "Che tu ponga ogni astinenzia al viso e alla bocca, e a tutti gli altri sentimenti del corpo, sí che niente al postutto vogli vedere, udire o toccare, se non tutte le cose utili all'anima tua." Ibid.

collected in yourself that you forget terrestrial things, so that with the mind fixed and immobile you stand in the celestial mysteries."[148] In *La vita cristiana*, Simone Fidati da Cascia revisits the language of mental stillness, writing that "the quiet of the soul" occurs when the soul "adores without the variety of various thought and imaginations and assailments and distractions," or when one can read "without distractions with the mind closed in the intellect"; "when the senses for their office and for their actions . . . do not move and pull outside of their delight."[149] Though there is a much more overtly devotional tone in the writings of these Italian friars, Alberti does retain a similar concept of stillness of thought deriving from absence of sensual pleasure and engagement in intellectual contemplation. Nor should it be surprising that this mentality be found in Alberti since his thoughts on the education of youths in *Della famiglia* emphasize over and over again that the temptations of vice must be resisted.[150]

Alberti's *De pictura* was intended to place painting amongst the liberal arts, and consequently the ideal painter's mind meditates on, and then withdraws from, bodily temptations or inclinations. Alberti's mind is constantly turning away from distractions, and this is prefigured in Christian texts on the liberal arts in which study of the natural world is something that is pursued, not for greater understanding of the world for itself, but to perceive God's presence in the world. This is not to deny that there is much in Alberti that is not strictly devotional, such as the wish that liberal artists' work be civically useful, which perhaps distinguishes him from earlier devotional writers (for example, it is unclear if Archimedes' feats of engineering, particularly as they pertain to war, are in harmony with Christian devotional practice). Perhaps more importantly, it is not clear if Alberti believed that the practice of a liberal art would actually

148 "Che quanto tu debbi celebrare el divino officio, cosí raccolto in te medesimo ti dimentichi delle cose terrene, acciò che colla mente fissa ed immobile stando ne' misterii celestiali." Ibid.

149 "La quiete della anima si è, quando ella adora ed ora sana varietá di varii pensieri e immaginazione e assalimenti e distrazioni, che soleva avere in quel tempo. La quiete della anima si è, quando legge sanza distraimento con la mente rinchiusa nello intelletto di quello che egli legge, ovvero per fede se non intende, ovvero per intelligenzia se intende; ed ancora quando parla, ella sempre sta ferma in suo propominemnto e sentimento. La quieta della anima si è, quando li sensi per loro ufficii e per loro atti e per loro diletti non lo muovono e trarla fuori di loro diletti. . . . La quiete dell'anima si è di non volere andare caendo cagioni di veruna cosa che Dio avere fatta, ma stare al tutto contento e adorare la sapienza di Dio infinita." Simone Fidati da Cascia, *La Vita Cristiana*, 637–638.

150 See for example, Alberti, *The Albertis of Florence*, 81. "Fathers, therefore, must be alert and farsighted concerning their children's minds and desires. They shall help them in praiseworthy things and dissuade them from all shameful ways and habits."

bring the artist to God, or if it would simply give him "tranquility" or understanding. Therefore, the comparison should not be pushed too far. However, it would be wrong to deny, for these reasons, that Alberti retains a Christian attitude toward the liberal arts, particularly as pertaining to his descriptions of the correct attitude of mind. In light of what has been said, it is tempting to suppose that the idea of beauty sought by Zeuxis was a vision of the world illuminated by his study, but perceived in the rational light of a mind detached from bodies and passions. Augustine, with whom Alberti seems later to have been in agreement, wrote that "it is most necessary to get out of the life of the senses into one's interior . . . [which some do] by retreating into solitude. Others do . . . by cultivating the liberal arts."[151]

A Part and a Whole: Alberti's Beauty

The eyes of the mind gaze upon the mental image illuminated by understanding in order to find the idea of beauty. Though the meaning of Alberti's "understanding" remains vague, in keeping with the Christian, Neoplatonic interpretation of the liberal arts, it appears to be related to the harmony of number. This also can be perceived faintly in Alberti's definition of beauty, which states that beauty is the assemblage of parts to form a coherent whole, and is therefore related to composition. It is from "the composition of surfaces [that] arises that elegant harmony and grace in bodies, which they call beauty."[152] Hence composition, which, as has been demonstrated, occurs in the mind (at least initially), is in part where beauty is to be found. Alberti offers a succinct definition of beauty along these lines in his later treatise on architecture *De re aedificatoria* (1452):

> The precise nature of beauty and ornament, and the difference between them, the mind could perhaps visualize more clearly than my words could explain. For the sake of brevity, however, let us define them as

151 Augustine, *De ordine*, 1.1.1.3 "Qui tamen ut se noscat, magna opus havet consuetudine recendendi a sensibus et animum in seipsum colligendi atque in seipso retinendi. Quod ii tantum assequuntur, qui plagas quasdam opinionum, quas vitae quotidianae cursus infligit, aut solitudine inurunt aut liberalibus medicant disciplinis."

152 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.35. "Ex superficierum compositione illa elegans in corporibus concinnitas et gratia extat, quam pulchritudinem dicunt." "Nasce della composizione delle superficie quella grazia ne' corpi quale dicono bellezza." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.35.

> follows: beauty is that reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse. It is a great and holy matter; all our resources of skill and ingenuity will be taxed in achieving it; and rarely is it granted, even to Nature herself, to produce anything that is entirely complete and perfect in every respect.[153]

Earlier scholars have suggested that Alberti's theory of beauty, a certain harmony arising from an assemblage of parts, descends from the classical tradition.[154] Furthermore, as discussed previously, there is a tendency in modern scholarship to understand Alberti's beauty as the proper selection of beautiful parts (for example, Zeuxis chose the beautiful parts of women and assembled them together to create beauty).[155] However, I argue that Alberti's beauty was not only an assemblage of beautiful parts but also the ordering of beautiful and ugly parts to achieve harmony. Thus beauty is the perception of order: finding the point of view from which a group of predetermined parts appears beautiful. Alberti wrote that "when we are to paint a *historia*, first we will think much of the way and order in which it would be beautiful," thereby strongly suggesting that beauty was a matter of order.[156]

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153 Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 6.2. "Sed pulcritudo atque ornamentum per se quid sit: quidve inter se differant, fortassis animo apertius intelligemus, quam verbis explicari a me possit. Nos tamen brevitatis gratia sic diffiniemus: ut sit pulchritudo quidem certa cum ratione concinnitas universarum partium in eo, cuius sint: ita ut addi aut diminui aut immutari possit nihil, quin imporbabilius reddatur. Magnum hoc et divinum, in quo perficiundo omnes vires artium et ingenii consumuntur; raroque, vel ipsi naturae, cuiquam concessum, ut in medium proferat, quod plane absolutum atque omni ex parte perfectum sit." Leon Battista Alberti, *L'Architettura* [*De re aedificatoria*], ed. and trans. Giovanni Orlandi (Milan: Edizioni il polifilo, 1966), vol. 2, 6.2.

154 See Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, "The Great Theory of Beauty and Its Decline," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1972), 168–170. Earlier scholars have suggested that Alberti's definition above is Aristotelian.

155 See, for example, Martin Kemp, "Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se," in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Cecil H. Clough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 318.

156 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.61. "Caeterum cum historiam picturi sumus, prius diutius excoitabimus quonam ordine et quibus modis eam componere pulcherriumum sit. Modulosque in chartis conicientes, tum totam historiam, tum singulas eisudem historiae partes commentabimur." "E quando aremo a dipignere storia, prima fra noi molto penseremo qual modo e quale ordine in quella sia bellissima, e faremo nostri concetti e modelli di tutta la storia e di ciascua sua parte prima." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.61.

In Christian texts on the liberal arts, beauty figured prominently. As shown above, Augustine wrote that reason was pleased by the beauty found in proportions and number, and thus the liberal arts were tantamount to a search for beauty in nature. Augustine also defined beauty in terms nearly identical to Alberti's in his early text *De ordine*: "for what pertains to the eyes, a reasonable whole made of parts is said to be beautiful. For the ears, we give the name of sweetness to the reasonable harmony of a choral composition."[157] Alberti's final stipulation—that in beauty it is not possible to alter the "harmony of parts" but for the worse—can also be found in Augustine. On the perfection of the human body, for example, he wrote that if even the smallest thing in a body is altered "how nearly nothing is taken from the body, but how much from its beauty . . . [which is found in] the balance and proportion of the parts."[158] My intention here is not to suggest that Alberti is dependent on Augustine, but rather to illustrate how this definition of beauty as a harmony of parts from which nothing can be taken away is integral to Christian optimism, or the belief that God had created the world as a work of beauty.

Augustine's beauty, for instance, was not something that could be created by choosing many beautiful things and putting them together. Rather, beauty was the sum total of God's creation taken in its entirety. Though much of the world seemed to be ugly, it was incumbent upon man to search for the order within God's creation, hence to find the perspective from which the world became beautiful. Augustine expresses this concept by likening it to "one who, confined to surveying a single section of a mosaic floor . . . blamed the artisan for being ignorant of order and composition," whereas from the correct perspective the mosaic comes "together in the unity of a beautiful portrait." This difficulty faces all liberal artists who search to "grasp the harmony . . . of the universe as a whole."[159] Again, this sentiment is not confined to writings by Augustine,

157 Augustine, *De ordine*, 2.2.15.42. "sensit nihil aliud quam pulchritudinem sibi placere, et in pulchritudine figuras, et in figuris dimensiones, in dimensionibus numeros."

158 Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.22. "sicut in specie visibilis hominis, si unum radatur supercilium, quam propemodum nihil corpori, et quam multum detrahitur pulchritudini' quoniam non mole constat, sed parilitate ac dimensione membrorum." Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Migne, *PL*, 041.0355).

159 Augustin, *De ordine*, 1.1.1.2 "Sed hoc pacto si quis tam minutum cerneret, ut in vermiculato pavimento nihil ultra unius tessellae modulum acies eius valeret ambire, vituperaret artificem velut ordinationis et compositionis ignarum eo quod varietatem lapillorum perturbatam putaret, a quo illa emblemata in unius pulchritudinis faciem congruentia simul cerni collustrarique non possent. Nihil enim aliud minus eruditis hominibus accidit, qui universam rerum coaptationem atque concentum imbecilla mente complecti

and in fact it is a Pauline view, which appears in late medieval Italian devotional literature. In *La Vita Cristiana*, Simone Fidati da Cascia exhorts readers to see "how well God has well ordered the world, and of so many and so diverse things, and all he has converge in one form and in one unity and in one beauty of the universe."[160] As in Alberti, this beauty is diminished through alteration: da Cascia recalls Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:19–26) when he writes that "in the human body, the more noble member cannot say to that which seems more vile 'you do not help the body and I do not need you.' "[161]

Beauty, as defined in Alberti's architectural treatise, conforms to this Christian worldview, and likewise these sentiments are echoed in *De pictura*: beauty is a view of the world in which, like a mosaic, a "beautiful portrait" emerges from a series of "apparently disordered" parts. It is the order in which even the ugly parts of nature fit into a "great and holy matter." As seen, Alberti stresses that artists should attend not to the individual parts of a painting to too great a degree though knowledge and understanding of each part was, of course, essential. Focusing on one part meant, however, losing one's sight of the whole. "Considering all these parts, [the painter] should be attentive not only to the likeness of things but also and especially to beauty."[162] The act of painting, as envisioned by Alberti, could thus be imagined as being like the composition of a mosaic in that the mind needs to be aware of the properties of each tile, whilst always gazing at the arrangement of the whole.[163] Furthermore, everything that is part of God's world has its place in a beautiful image: "the first thing that gives pleasure in a *historia* is a plentiful variety."[164]

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et considerare non valentes, si quid eos offenderit, quia suae cogitationi magnum est, magnam putant rebus inhaerere foeditatem."

160 "Dunque vedete bene quanto Iddio ha bene ordinato il mondo, e di tante e sí diverse cose, e tutte le fa convenire in una forma e in una unitá e in una bellezza dello universo." Simone Fidati da Cascia, *La Vita Cristiana*, 676–677.

161 "E come che è nel corpo umano il membro piú nobile non può dire a quello che pare piú vile: 'Tu non se' del corpo e non ho bisogno di te.' " Ibid., 677.

162 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.55. "At ex partibus omnibus non modo similitudinem rerum, verum etiam in primis ipsam pulchritudinem diligat." "E di tutte le parti li piacerà non solo renderne similitudine, ma più aggiugnervi bellezza." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.55.

163 Alberti's notion of composition, in which parts are fitted together, has been called mosaic-like, and modern historians have puzzled over this approach. See Wright, "Alberti's 'De Pictura,' " 69, and also Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 131–33. Alberti himself likened the form of literary composition to the arrangement of a mosaic in *Profugiorum ab erumna libri*, 80–82.

164 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.40. "Primum enim quod in historia voluptatem afferat est ipsa copia et varietas rerum." "Quello che prima dà voluttà nella istoria viene dalla copia e varietà delle cose." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.40.

Though Alberti at one stage appears to censure the painting of older people who are not beautiful ("the faces of old women will be ugly to look at . . . so in the composition of surfaces grace and beauty must above all be sought"[165]) he might not have meant this literally, or at least he contradicts himself when later he says that pictures should have a "properly arranged mixture of old men, youths, boys, matrons, maidens, children . . . provided it is appropriate to what is going on in the picture."[166] Thus, though he believed older people to be ugly, they were needed in a painting, indicating that ugliness had its place in beautiful paintings; Alberti's notion of beauty was founded on the inclusion of ugliness, subject to its appropriate order.[167] True ugliness was the absence of order:

> I disapprove of those painters who, in their desire to appear rich or to leave no space empty, follow no system of composition, but scatter everything about in random confusion with the result that their *historia* does not appear to be doing anything but merely to be in a turmoil.[168]

On this topic, certain stories told by Alberti, such as how Apelles painted Antigonus so as to conceal his bad eye, may at first seem trite, though they convey a profound message: the artist must find a perspective from which to gaze upon the world such that the ugliness of the world is harmoniously integrated into a beautiful whole.[169] The beautiful unity of the world amid its variety is a theme present also in the Bible, particularly in Paul's epistle to the Romans, in which he writes that "as in one body we have many members, and not all

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165 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.35. "quales in vetularum vultibus videmus, erit quidem is aspectu turpis." "simile al viso delle vecchierelle, questo essere in aspetto bruttissimo." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.35.

166 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.40. "Dicam historiam esse copiosissimam illam in qua suis locis permixti aderunt senes, viri, adolescentes, pueri, matronae . . . omnemque copiam laudabo modo ea ad rem de qua illic agitur conveniat." "Dirò io quella istoria essere copiosissima in quale a' suo luoghi sieno permisti vecchi, giovani, fanciulli . . . e loderò io qualunque copia quale s'apartenga a quella istoria." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.40. On the use of terms from classical rhetoric in this passage, see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 137–139.

167 For other views on Alberti's beauty, see Katz, *Alberti and the Humanist Theory of the Arts*, 17.

168 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.40. "eo nullam sequuntur compositionem sed confuse et dissolute omnia disse minant, ex quo non rem agere sed tumultuare historia videtur." "Biasimo io quelli pittori quali, dove vogliono parere copiosi nulla lassando vacuo, ivi non composizione, ma dissoluta confusione disseminano; pertanto non pare la storia facci qualche cosa degna, ma sia in tumulto aviluppata." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.40.

169 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.40.

the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ" (Romans, 12:4–5).[170] Alberti alludes to this chapter of the book of Romans in the portions of *De pictura* concerning variety, when he pleads for a variety of gestures and expressions in a painting, writing that "we mourn with the mourners, laugh with those who laugh and grieve with the grief-stricken."[171] The phrase clearly recalls Paul's exhortation to "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans, 12:15), a statement repeated variously in later spiritual literature.[172] The Pauline echo of Alberti's words reinforces the spiritual dimension of his desire for beautiful variety.

We may surmise that finding beauty in the world and creating images that display harmony imparts harmony to the artist and the viewer. For example, in the *Profugiorum ab erumna libri*, Alberti writes that forming compositions and architectural designs brings tranquility to the soul. Just as interior concentration can produce a sensation of timelessness or abstractedness from the material world, similarly the mind's investigations impart harmony to the soul. One interlocutor states:

> There is nothing that takes me farther away from my vexations of soul, nor keeps me so much in quiet and tranquility of mind, as when I occupy my thoughts in some dignified work and put myself to some arduous and rare investigation. I have only to give myself to learning by heart some poem or some optimal prose; I have only to give myself to commenting on some rhetorically ornate text, to amplify some argumentation; and only, especially at night, when my stimulations of the soul disquiet me and keep me awake, to twist myself away from my bitter cares and my sad disconcertedness . . . And sometimes, in the absence of such investigations, I compose in my mind and build some very complex building, and

170 "Sicut enim in uno corpore multa membra habemus omnia autem membra non eundem actum habent: ita multi unum corpus sumus in Christo singuli autem alter alterius membra." (Latin Vulgate).

171 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.41. "ut lugentibus conlugeamus, ridentibus adrideamus, dolentibus condoleamus." "che piagniamo con chi piange, e ridiamo con chi ride, e doglianci con chi si duole." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.41.

172 "Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus." (Latin Vulgate). This passage of the Bible is also discussed with reference to Alberti by Paolo Alei, " 'Intelligitur plus semper quam pingitur': The Renaissance Heritage of Timanthes' Veil" (PhD thesis, Oxford University, 2002), chapter 2. This exhortation to feel what those around you feel is repeated in words more similar to those used by Alberti in Simone da Cascina, *Colloquio Spirituale*, in *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, ed. Arrigo Levasti (Milan: Rizzoli Editori, 1935), 955. "cioè conduolti col bisognoso, insegna agl'ignoranti, ride con chi ride, piange co' piangenti."

> place there more orders and numbers of columns with various unusual capitals and bases, and I find convenient and new grace in the cornices and paneling. And with similar compositions I occupy myself until sleep occupies me . . . And above all, when I try, nothing satisfies me . . . as much as mathematical demonstrations and investigations, especially when I study them for some useful purpose in life; as does Battista, who extracted his rudiments of painting and also his mathematical elements and extracted those incredible prepositions of *de motibus ponderis*.[173]

Forming buildings in the mind and pursuing investigations brings peace and tranquility to the soul, which is a kind of unity that the mind experiences when it is not being pulled toward unhappy thoughts. Therefore the process of imagining a beautiful and harmonious building brings repose to the designer just as the building itself expresses harmony to the observer. Like the artist who turns inward to create his painting, the architectural inventions that are described bring the speaker to a meditative state. Though Alberti does not explicitly mention the activity of painters in this passage, he clearly sees a relationship between the two, as he states that *De pictura* was the result of such "demonstrations and investigations." This attitude descends from the Christian tradition of the liberal arts, when Augustine proposed that liberal study enabled a contemplative return to God. Alberti obviously does not go so far, saying only

173 "Cosa niuna tanto mi disduce da mia vessazione d'animo, né tanto mi contiene in quiete e tranquillità di mente, quanto occupare e miei pensieri in qualche degna faccenda e adoperarmi in qualche ardua e rara pervestigazione. Soglio darmi a imparare a mente qualche poema o qualche ottima prosa; soglia darmi a commnetare qualche essornazione, ad amplificare qualche argumentazione; e soglio, massime la notte, quando e miei stimoli d'animo mi tengono sollecito e desto, per distormi da mie acerbe cure e triste sollicitudini, soglio fra me investigare e construere in mente qualche inaudita macchina da muovere e portare, da fermare e statuire cose grandissime e inestimabili. E qualche volta m'avvenne che non solo me acquetai in mie agitazioni d'animo, ma e ancora giunsi cose rare e degnissime di memoria. e talora, mancandomi simili investigazioni, composi a mente e coedificai qualche compositissimo edificio, e disposivi più ordini e numeri di colonne con varii capitelli e base inusitate, e collega'vi conveniente e nuova grazia di cornici e tavolati. E con simili conscrizioni occupai me stessi sino che 'l sonno occupò me. E quando pur mi sentissi non atto con questi rimedii a rassettarmi, io piglio qualche ragione suttilissima in conoscere e discutere cagioni ed essere di cose da natura riposte e ascose. E sopra tutto, quanto io provai, nulla più in questo mi satisfa, nulla tutto mi comprende e adopera, quanto le investigazioni e dimostrazioni matematice, massime quando io studi ridulre a qualche utile pratica in vita; come fece qui Battista, qual cavò e suoi rudimenti i pittura e anche e suoi elementi pur da' matematici e cavonne quelle incredibili preposizioni *de motibus ponderis*." Alberti, *Profugiorum ab erumna libri*, 114–115.

that such exercises bring tranquility, though in both Augustine and Alberti the liberal arts elevate the soul of the artist.

There are, however, numerous comments in *De pictura* regarding the painter's closeness to God, which one might presume to be rhetorical excess.[174] "Painting possesses a truly divine power";[175] it contributes "considerably to the piety which binds us to the gods";[176] painters "feel themselves to be almost like the Creator" and are "god[s] among mortals."[177] By placing Alberti's text in context with other Christian texts on the liberal arts, the spiritual echoes of the painter's task come into relief, emphasizing that painting engages man's most noble faculties. Alberti's text is ornamented with citations from classical literature; however, the precepts and the language itself is steeped in Christian thought and this chapter reveals that it is possible to probe the spiritual, meditational nature of the painter's task, beyond the perennial observation that painters paid homage to God through the study of nature. Specifically, this homage entailed approaching nature with the mind inflected in a certain way, that is, to avoid curiosity, to illuminate the interior space of the mind, and to avoid the temptations of sensual bodily pleasure. Only then could the painter perceive beauty in God's perfect works and convey this through his or her imitation of nature. Ultimately this relates closely to the concepts discussed in the previous chapter. Alberti counsels artists to seek form above matter, and Bocchi's remarks on ornament maintain the spirit of Alberti's idea.

One might wonder what an image made by gazing at one's interior image of beauty, according to Alberti's suggestions, might look like. Unfortunately, Alberti did not leave us a body of art criticism; however, there is a passage in Vasari's *vita* of Luca della Robbia comparing that artist's work with Donatello's, which recalls some of Alberti's terms, giving us some art criticism with which to supplement Alberti's theoretical writings. The comparison of Alberti and Vasari is less than perfect, not least of all because the works in question are

174 Notably, Westfall, "Painting and the Liberal Arts," 502–503 takes these comments seriously.

175 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.25. "Nam habet ea quidem in se vim admodum divinam non modo ut quod de amicitia dicunt." "Tiene in sé la pittura forza divina non solo quanto si dice dell'amicizia." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.25.

176 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.25. "nam ad pietatem qua superis coniuncti sumus, atque ad animos integra quadam cum religione detinendos nimium pictura profuit." "la pittura molto così giova a quella pietà per quale siamo congiunti agli iddii, insieme e a tenere gli animi nostri pieni di religione." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.25.

177 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.25–26. "quasi alterum sese inter mortales deum praestaret." "cum opera sua admirari videant, tum deo se paene simillimos esse intelligant." "sé porgesse quasi uno iddio." "e sentirà sé quasi giudicato un altro iddio." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.25–26.

sculptures rather than paintings and Vasari writes over a hundred years after Alberti. I think it is a helpful comparison, however, given that both of these artists are expressly mentioned by Alberti in his dedication of *Della Pittura* to Brunelleschi, and since the language used by Vasari so strongly echoes the concepts found in Alberti.[178] In his *vita* of Luca della Robbia, Vasari compares the sculptor's singing gallery for the duomo of Florence with one made later for the same church by Donatello (Figures 7 and 8).

Praising Donatello over Luca, Vasari writes that the latter's work was deficient for being so completely "finished and polished," because he did "know how to ever lift his hands from [his] work" whereas Donatello expressed his "concept with few strikes."[179] The terminology obviously recalls the fault of Protogenese, whereby Luca was too interested in material qualities. Alberti's illuminated mind as the space in which intellectual travel may occur is also evoked by Vasari, who suggests that an artist should possess "from the start . . . in his idea

FIGURE 7 *Donatello*, Cantoria (*detail of putti*) (*1433–39*). *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

178 Alberti, "Dedication of the Italian text," in *On Painting*, 34.

179 "con la sua pulitezza, e finimento." "si sprima il suo concetto in pochi colpi: & che per contrario lo stento, e la troppa diligenza alcuna fiata Toglia la forza, & il sapere a coloro, che non sanno mai levare le mani dall'opera, che fanno." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 263.

FIGURE 8 *Luca della Robbia, the Elder*, Cantoria (*detail of angels*) (*1433–39*). *Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: ALINARI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

what he wishes to make" so that he may "walk resolutely toward perfection."[180] Artists who work in this way are like poets who dictate by "poetic furor," suggesting again that Donatello attended to some inward drive.[181] Though we cannot know for sure if Alberti would agree with Vasari's distinctions between Luca and Donatello (and, indeed, Alberti may have objected to the force of

180 "E chi ha da principio, come si dee, havere nella Idea quello, che vuol fare, camina sempre risoluto alla perfezzione con molta agevolezza." Ibid.

181 "furore poetico." Ibid.

movement in Donatello's sculptures),[182] it is tempting to suppose that Vasari's ideas are in sympathy with Alberti's.

Vasari's opinion has been validated by later historians who have often observed the same differences between the two works: Donatello's work shows more energy whereas Luca della Robbia's is more decorative. The distinction between the two works can be restated in the Albertian terms outlined above in which the difference lies not so much in the matter of energy or decoration, but rather in the mental attitude of the artist while he works. Donatello is superior not for having more energy, but rather for appealing to an inner idea whilst at work on the sculpture, and not allowing himself to become unduly interested in the material object itself.

Through this study, therefore, we obtain a clearer picture of the mental faculties that were believed to have been engaged by painters, and the spiritual beliefs that colored these mental exercises. The intellectual traditions out of which Alberti's text emerges indicates that, despite appearing more scientifically or objectively interested in nature, painting remained a deeply spiritual activity.

182 On Alberti and movement, with consideration of Donatello, see Summers, *Michelangelo and the Lanugage of Art*, 90–91.

CHAPTER 3

The Word of God and the Book of the World in the Writings of Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo as a Reader of Spiritual Literature

Having observed Christian themes in Alberti's treatise on painting, it is fitting to consider the writings of Leonardo da Vinci, sometimes said to be Alberti's successor in art theory.[1] Leonardo's writings on art are found in his remaining autograph manuscripts and the sixteenth-century manuscript known as the Codex Urbinas 1270, comprised of excerpts of his writings, presumably collated posthumously, perhaps under the direction of his pupil Giovan Francesco Melzi.[2] The majority of this chapter concerns the writings on art found in the Codex Urbinas, consisting of a paragone of the arts (a comparison of painting and other arts such as music, poetry and sculpture), and a collection of writings dispersed more widely in the seventeenth century known as the *Trattato di pittura*. As in my discussion of Alberti, I am primarily interested in the spiritual ideas that may be perceived within Leonardo's writings on painting, though I do not intend necessarily to imply that Leonardo himself was actively encouraging spiritual interpretations. Rather, when Leonardo's thoughts are considered in light of the spiritual writings in circulation during his lifetime, their spiritual dimensions are thrown into relief.

The scientific and literary texts used by Leonardo have long been discussed by historians, the majority of his writings seeming to pertain more directly to these discourses than to spirituality. However, it is useful to illuminate Leonardo's spiritual sources to better comprehend the devotional experiences of Renaissance art according to one of its most celebrated exponents. This project necessarily entails reconstructing the kinds of spiritual texts with which Leonardo was familiar, a task aided greatly by two book lists found among his remaining manuscripts, presumably describing the contents or partial contents of his personal library. The first of these booklists, from

1 See Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci on Painting: A Lost Book* (*libro A*), ed. Pedretti, Carlo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), also Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

2 The Codex Urbinas 1270 is discussed by Pedretti in Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci on Painting*, 96.

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roughly 1497, contains approximately 40 titles and a later booklist from 1503–4 names 116 texts.[3] Several titles in both lists are spiritual books, and other titles contain spiritual precepts even if their primary content is not religious. The former category includes a copy of the Bible,[4] the Psalms,[5] Augustine's *De civitate Dei*[6] and a book of his sermons,[7] a work by San Bernardino of

3 Ladislao Reti, "The Two Unpublished Manuscripts of Leonardo da Vinci in the Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid—II," *Burlington Magazine* 110 (1968), 91; see also commentary in Carlo Pedretti, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci: A Commentary to Jean Paul Richter's Edition*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977), 2: 355–368. For the earlier booklist, see Leonardo da Vinci, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 2: 366, no. 1469. In general, citations from Leonardo's manuscripts will be taken from Richter's *Literary Works* (noting corrections made by Pedretti in his *Commentary*), and references will be given according to Richter's numbering. Any relevant notes from Pedretti's commentary will be cited with the understanding that, unless otherwise stated, the information refers to the same numerical entry. In cases in which the cited passage is not found in Richter, but rather in Leonardo's *Trattato*, the edition used has been Leonardo da Vinci, *Libro di Pittura: Codice Urbinate la. 1270 neela Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, ed. Carlo Pedretti, transcription Carlo Vecce (Florence: Giunti, 1995), the chapter numbering will follow Pedretti's numbering. Translations will be cited from Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on painting* [*codex urbinas latinus 1270*] *by Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. A. Philip McMahon, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956) or Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone: A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the Codex Urbinas*, ed. and trans. Claire Farago (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Since translators have sometimes numbered Leonardo's chapters differently, appropriate reference will be given.

4 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 5. Reti notes that several Italian editions of the Bible were published from 1471 onward.

5 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 368, no. 1469, point 11. Richter notes *El Psalterio de David in lingua volgare* (*da Malermi Venetia nel M.CCCC.LXXVI*).

6 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 11. Carlo Pedretti, "Il concetto di bellezza e utilità in Sant'Agostino e Leonardo," *Achademia Leonardi Vinci: Journal of Leonardo Studies & Bibliography of Vinciana* 5 (1992), suggests that Leonardo's edition may have been a vulgate version published in Venice around 1480. See also Paolo D'Achille, "Le traduzioni italiane del "De civitate Dei" e il loro significato storico," in *Il "De civitate Dei". L'opera, le interpretazioni, l'influsso*, ed. Elena Cavalcanti (Rome: Herder, 1996).

7 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 50. Reti suggests St. Augustinus, *Sermones* . . . (Modena, per Bald Struci, 1477) or an Italian translation in manuscript. The book referred to is probably the spurious collection of Augustinian sermons often entitled his *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*. The collection went through many different forms, originally comprising 22 or 23 sermons, and eventually growing to 76 sermons; see Eric Leland Saak, *Creating Augustine: Interpreting Augustine and Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 3. The collection was relatively widely disseminated, and Leland Saak reports that some 424 manuscripts can be identified; see *Creating Augustine*, 83. There is also a complex printing history, and versions of the text were available printed

Siena,[8] a book of the passion of Christ,[9] a text concerning Santa Margherita,[10] a book on the immortality of the soul,[11] an unidentified collection of sermons, and the life of Saint Ambrose.[12] Many other books on these lists contain spiritual material, for instance the popular book of morals, the *Fior di virtù*,[13] Federigo Frezzi's poem the *Quadriregio*,[14] Cecco d'Ascoli's *L'Acerba*,[15] the

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in both Latin and Italian. On vulgate editions of the sermons see Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books, 1465–1550: A Finding List* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1983), s.v. "pseudo-Augustine," and Paolo Cherubelli, *Le Edizioni volgari delle opere di S. Agostino nella Rinascita* (Florence: Tip. Fiorenza, 1940). Because of the range of material that the various editions potentially contain, it is difficult to suggest which sermons Leonardo might have known. The Italian edition I have consulted is *Sermones ad heremitas* (Florence: Lorenzo Morgiani & Johann Petri, 1500); I have also consulted a later reprinting of the vulgate sermons, *Volgarizzamento de i sermoni di S. Agostino* (Florence: Domenico Maria Manni, 1731) in addition to some Latin incunabula, and have found that the sermons I refer to in this chapter are generally available in these collections.

8 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 30. Reti has suggested Bernardus Senesis, *Sermones de Evangelio eterno* c. 1490 or *De Vita Christiana*, c. 1473 or *La Confessione volgare* (Pescia: Franc. Cenni, 1485).

9 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 54. Reti suggests Bernardo Pulci, *La Passione di Christo* . . . (Bologna: Ugo di Rugeri, 1489) or, Juliano Dati, *Incommincia la Passione di Christo, historiata in rima vulgari* . . . (no place or date but around 1500).

10 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 67. Reti suggests *Rappresentazione e festa di S. Margharita. Fece stampare Maestro Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto* (Florence, c. 1500).

11 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," suggests it was by Francesco Filelfo (1478), and notes Kristeller's suggestion of Giacomo Campora (1472). The same book occurs on line 12 of the earlier book list (Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 336, no. 1469), which Richter suggests is Marsilio Ficino's *Theologica Platonica*. Carlo Dionisotti, "Leonardo uomo di lettere," *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 5 (1962) is also of the opinion that it is the work by Giacomo Campora, noting its wide distribution in printed and manuscript copies in the second half of the fifteenth century. The edition I have consulted is Giacomo Campora, *Dell'immortalità dell'anima* (Venice: Guglielmus de Cereto, 1494).

12 See Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no 92. Reti suggests *La Vita et li miracoli del beatissimo Ambrosio patrono de li Milanesi . . . compilato per Paulino episcopo* (Milan, 1492).

13 Ibid., no. 53. There were many editions published toward the end of the fifteenth century. See also Richter, *Literary Works*, 2: 336, note to no. 1469. See Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1172, for an example of Leonardo's citations of this book, and also an example of the Augustinian philosophy used in the book. See Edmondo Solmi, *Le fonti dei manoscritti di Leonardo da Vinci* (Turin: Loescher, 1908), 155–169; also Giorgio Castelfranco, "Leonardo Scrittore," in *Studi Vinciana* (Rome: De Luca, 1966), 8–9.

14 See Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 22.

15 Ibid., no. 74.

Chronicles of Isidore of Seville,[16] and a book about Solomon's temple.[17] Based on these texts, we can surmise that Leonardo had at least a limited taste for popular devotional works; in addition to the Bible, he seems to have favored historical or encyclopedic works and sermons.

The evidence of these book lists raises important questions about how to use these documents in order to reconstruct Leonardo's intellectual sources.[18] With a book list in hand it is possible to identify particular texts that plausibly had a direct influence on Leonardo; however, there are difficulties with this approach in the case of spiritual literature that make the consultation of texts beyond the booklist appealing. As is apparent by the sometimes vague descriptions given of the above books, it is not always possible to identify the precise texts that Leonardo owned, though it appears that many of the spiritual books were Italian printed sources and therefore popular books that disseminated spiritual precepts to the literate public. The book of sermons by Augustine is a case in point: if this is the widely disseminated pseudo-Augustine *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*, then it could refer to various printed editions with sometimes different groupings of sermons. Further issues using the booklists stem from scholarly attempts to delineate different phases in Leonardo's intellectual growth. As noted, some of the spiritual books listed appear only in the slightly later book list, raising the possibility that these books could not shed light on his earlier writings.[19] However, many of the passages of Leonardo's writings considered in this chapter are his earliest writings from the 1490's, many of which contain ideas revisited in later manuscripts.[20] It is possible, however, that Leonardo acquired these spiritual books before he inventoried them,[21] and it is also possible that he had access to spiritual books outside his

16 Ibid., no. 59. Reti Suggests *Cronica de Sancto Isidoro menore* . . . (Ascoli: Golielmo de Linis de Alamania, 1477). The vulgate translation of this text has been studied and reprinted in Isidore of Seville, *La 'Cronaca Volgare' Isidoriana: testo tre-quattrocentesco di area abruzzese*, ed. Paolo D'Achille (L'Aquila: Deputazione abruzzese di storia patria, 1982).

17 Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," no. 87.

18 On using the book lists to establish a portrait of Leonardo as a reader, see Carlo Dionisotti, "Leonardo uomo di lettere"; Kemp, *Marvelous Works*, 82–90, 240–241. In her commentary in *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, Farago, for instance, has favored placing Leonardo's writings within a broad intellectual tradition.

19 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 336, no. 1469; see Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1469 on the dating of the earlier manuscript.

20 On the dating of the *Paragone* arguments, see Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 14, and on his writings on music, ibid., 361.

21 It is after all, unlikely that he added over fifty books to his collection in the very year he wrote the list.

personal collection, for instance at the libraries of Santo Spirito or San Marco in Florence.[22] Moreover, it is impossible to gauge to what extent Leonardo became familiar with spiritual ideas through conversation: his friend Luca Pacioli, for instance, was familiar with Augustine's writings and quoted him in his *Divina porportione*; furthermore, as a reader of printed sermons, Leonardo may have attended the sermons of the popular preachers of his day.[23] Given these issues in this chapter, I begin from sources included on the booklists, though my method will be at times to enlarge upon this list when appropriate by consulting other texts in circulation at that time, similar in form to the above-noted books, and in so doing, to reconstruct aspects of the spiritual discourses within which Leonardo was writing.[24] Whilst the booklists helps us to develop a more focused picture of Leonardo's personal interests, this method is appropriate when analyzing spiritual sources in particular, since there were so many fields of spiritual discourse. Though some earlier scholars note with surprise that Leonardo read spiritual writers (though a number of passages in his manuscripts contain moral precepts with a spiritual tone), it is legitimate to place his thoughts within this discourse, since many of Leonardo's manuscripts, when read with spiritual texts in mind, seem clearly to evoke Christian terms and concepts.[25] Spiritual themes in Leonardo's writings pertain to his thoughts on the excellence of painting, which was due, he argued, to the ease and perfection with which painting communicated with viewers. As will be shown, spiritual texts from Leonardo's library comparing man's spoken and written language with God's Word (the body of Christ and the Word of the Bible) illuminate Leonardo's ideas about perfect communication.

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22 On Santo Spirito in Florence and the study of Augustine, see Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, 13–16. See also Leonardo, *Literary Works*, no. 1444 and Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1444. For a note concerning the library of Pavia, see Leonardo, *Literary Works*, no. 1448. On Leonardo and San Marco see Carlo Vecce, "Libreria di Sancto Marco," *Achademia Leonardi Vinci*, 5 (1992).

23 See Pacioli, *Divina porportione*, 62.

24 The first assumption is made by Pedretti, "Il concetto di bellezza."

25 See Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," 82; Solmi, *Le fonti dei manoscritti*, 34; Giuseppe Saitta, "Il pensiero religioso di Leonardo da Vinci," in *Nicolò Cusano e l'Umanesimo Italiano* (Bologna: Tamari 1957), 207. However, more recent scholarship has given more attention to Leonardo's spirituality and the spirituality evident in his paintings. Though to my knowledge no other study has placed Leonardo's thoughts in the context of the spiritual texts he owned, Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, gives more attention to Leonardo's Christian sources. Also see Rodolfo Papa, *Leonardo teologo: L'artista 'nipote di Dio'* (Milan: Àncora, 2006) and Pedretti, "Il concetto di bellezza."

Tears and Laughter in Leonardo

It is clear that Leonardo believed strongly in the affective and communicative power of religious paintings. He comes very close to the language of Bocchi's text on the Annunziata image, for instance, when he describes the pilgrims' reactions to sacred art, writing that "pictures representing deities are kept constantly concealed under costly draperies" before which

> great ecclesiastical rites are performed with singing to the strains of instruments; and at the moment of unveiling the great multitudes of peoples who have flocked there throw themselves to the ground, worshipping and praying to that one whose image is represented for the recovery of their health and for their eternal salvation as if the god were present in person.[26]

It is possible that Leonardo was thinking of the Annunziata cult when he wrote this passage, given that he is believed to have worked for the Servites, and here mentions music performed before the painting, the unveiling of the image, and the prayers for health, elements of the Annunziata cult, or of the devotion to other miraculous images, as discussed in chapter one.[27] He confirms the beliefs of Richard Trexler, David Freedberg, and Hans Belting, stating that paintings possessed the presence of represented personages when he

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26 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 35, no. 8. "hor non si vede le pitture rappresentatrici delle divine deità esser al continuo tenute coperte con copriture di grandissimi prezzi? E quando si scoprano, prima si fa grande solennità ecclesiastiche di vari canti con diversi suoni e nello scroprire la gran moltitudine de' populi, che quivi concorrono, immediate si gittano a terra, quella adorando e pregando, per cui tale pittura è figurata, del' aquisto della perduta sanità e della etterna salute, non altra mente, che se tale iddea fusse li presente in vita?" Earlier in this same passage, Leonardo writes "Do we not see great kings of the East go about veiled and covered because they think they might diminish their fame by showing themselves in public and divulging their presence?" "hor non vedemo noi li grandissimi Re dell' Oriente andare velati e coperti, credendo diminuire la famma loro col publicare e divulgare le loro presentie?" The passage seems to recall the New Testatment, Paul 2 Corinthians, 3:12–13. "Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside."

27 See Kemp, *Marvellous Works*, 214 on the possibility that Leonardo worked for the Servites around 1500. The story is originally found in Vasari's biography of Leonardo, in which Vasari recalls a cartoon by Leonardo exhibited at the SS. Annunziata. Vasari's description of the people who visited the cartoon mirrors the pilgrims who visited the Annuziata fresco; Vasari likewise emphasizes the beauty and virtue of the Virgin in his description of Leonardo's work.

later writes that "the Deity loves such a painting and loves those who adore and revere it . . . and bestows grace and deliverance through it according to the belief of those who assemble in such a spot."[28]

As interested as he may have been in the rituals performed before paintings, it is clear that Leonardo believed paintings ought to inspire passion not through pomp and ornament but rather through naturalistic depiction of human emotion. Echoing Alberti's citation of the Bible nearly verbatim, Leonardo states that "nature decrees that with those who weep, one sheds tears, and with those who laugh one becomes happy," and therefore instructs artists not to mix "those who weep . . . with . . . those who laugh."[29] Although in another passage Leonardo seems to discourage paintings that provoke tears, writing that "weeping implies a greater agitation than laughter," he did in several passages describe how to paint a figure crying, presumably so that the painting might evoke religious sentiments compatible with compunction.[30] To this end, Leonardo discusses the causes of crying, noting that some cry with "anger, [others] from suspicion, some for pain and torment, and some for pity and sorrow for lost friends or relatives."[31] The mental habit of distinguishing between various tears is a reflection of Christian texts on penitence; in fact, Leonardo's categories resemble a passage from the book of (pseudo-) Augustine's sermons that may have been in his library. In a sermon on penitence and compunction, Augustine contrasts the good tears of penitence with tears improperly shed for the loss of temporal things, such as material possessions, loved ones and the loss of health.[32] There are several reasons for the

28 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 36, no. 8. "certo tu confesserai, essere tale simulacro, il quale far non po tutte le scritture, che figurar potessino in effigie et in virtù tale Iddea. Adonque pare, che essa Iddea ami tal pittura, et ami, chi l'ama e riverisse, e si diletti d'essere adorata più in quella faccia gratie e doni di salute, secondo il credere di quelli, che in tal locho concoreno." On Trexler, Freedberg and Belting, see various references in chapter 1.

29 Leonardo, *Libro A*, 60. "Non misterai i malinconiosi e lacrimosi e piangenti colli allegri e ridenti, imperocchè la Natura dà che colli piangenti si lacrimi e colli ridenti si allegri, e si separa li loro risi e pianti."

30 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 64, no. 28. "ma il pittore moverà a riso, ma non à pianto, perch' el pianto è maggior accidente, che non è 'l riso."

31 Leonardo, *Libro A*, 54. "alcuno piange con ira, alcuno con paura ed alcuni per tenerazza ed allegrezza, alcuni per sospetto, ed alcuni per degli e tormento, et alcuni per pietà e dolore delli parenti e amici persi."

32 Augustine, *Sermones*, "Sermone di penitentia" (the pages of this book are unnumbered). "Guardatevi bene per amore mondano non piagnete la morte chorporale dalchuna persona: ne anchora el perdimento delle chose temporali: ne infermita: peroche tutte queste

tears of penitence, and also several kinds of tears that penitence provokes, for instance the tears of sin, the tears of pain from resisting sin, and also the tears of seeing God.[33] Leonardo similarly discusses how to depict various species of tears, recommending, for example, that "some weep their face to heaven with their hands held low, their fingers intertwined."[34] This likely corresponds to the tears of penitence of which, Augustine writes, tears are shed for past sins while looking ahead.[35] In another passage Leonardo writes that one "who weeps also tears his garments and hair with his hands, and scratches his face with his finger nails," an image that might have been suggested to him by Cecco d'Ascoli's *L'Acerba*, in which orphans and widows "call to God with bitter tears, pulling at their hair with their hands."[36] Although Leonardo is not generally known for images that inspire penitential emotions, discussions on how to paint a crying person were not entirely academic, since he initiated at least one large-scale painting of a penitent figure: the painting of *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, from around 1480 (Figure 9).[37] Although Jerome's hands are not intertwined, they are held low while his eyes gaze upward toward God.

Leonardo stresses the need to distinguish crying from laughter, recommending that the painter ought to "vary expressions, since the character of weeping differs from that of laughter."[38] Laughter and tears appeared visually similar to Leonardo, motivating him to study carefully the appearance of each. "Between one who laughs and one who weeps there is no difference in the eye or mouth or cheeks," he writes, "but only in the rigidity of the eyebrows, which are drawn

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chose sono necessarie alla salute. Et se non cifussino necessarie alla nostra salute & similmente alnostro utile: Dio non celharebbe date. Siche non piangete elvostro bene: Pognanci nella volonta di Dio."

33 Ibid., "Sermone di penitentia." "El primo fu el peccato che e nellanima. Il secondo sie il dolore & la pena a raffrenare la natura che non pcchi piu: & di quello che ha commesso fare iusta penitentia con lachryme. Il terzo sie il desiderio di veder idio."

34 Leonardo, *Libro A*, 54. "alcuni col viso al cielo e con le mani in basso avendo le ditta di quelle insieme tessute."

35 Augustine, *Sermones*, "Sermone di penitentia." "Adunque lavera penitentia sie piagnere esua pecchati; &guardasi pel tempo che ha advenire di piu non peccare."

36 Leonardo, *Libro A*, 61. "A colui che piange s'aggionge ancora le mani stracciare li vestimenti e capegli e con l'unghie stracciarsi la pelle del volto." Also see: Francesco Stabili (Cecco D'Ascoli), *L'Acerba*, ed. Achille Crespi (Ascoli Piceno: Casa Editrice di Giuseppe Cesari, 1927), 192. "Per gli orfani e le vedove e i pupilli/ Chiamanti Iddio nell amaro piano,/ Sterpanti con le mani i lor capilli."

37 See Kemp, *Marvellous Works*, 57.

38 Leonardo, *Libro A*, 54. "sì com'è variato l'accidente del pianto dall'accidente del riso."

FIGURE 9 *Leonardo da Vinci,* Saint Jerome in the Wilderness (*c. 1480*). *Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums, Vatican State.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

together by him who weeps and are raised by him who laughs."[39] I have already discussed the juxtaposition between laughter and tears in Alberti's text and its relationship to writings of St. Paul; these contrasting passions were commonly paired together in other spiritual texts as well. For instance, the gospel of Luke quotes Christ preaching the words "blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh," (Luke, 6:21) and later "woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25). Likely as a result of these passages, the spiritual literature of the Middle Ages contrasted the impropriety of laughter with the virtue of tears: in the *Specchio della vera penitenza*, where tears are fervently encouraged, the third grade of humility is to be not always ready to laugh easily.[40] Laughter was emblematic of taking pleasure in earthly things and hence ultimately a grave ill; Simone Fidati da Cascia writes that material pleasure "is similar to the pleasure of delirious people who die laughing."[41] Later writers on art would deride poorly executed paintings, criticizing them for inspiring laughter instead of tears. For instance, the sixteenth-century theologian, Gilio da Fabriano, writes that certain painterly faults cause "laughter more than compunction," illustrating that the ideal of penitential tears was the opposite of undesirable laughter.[42] As noted above, however, Leonardo believed that in some cases it was preferable to make viewers laugh; in the treatise on painting by Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, the author notes that Leonardo once made a composition of some joking figures that provoked laughter in viewers.[43] The significance of Leonardo's inversion is unclear; it may be that he delighted in perverting the religious ideal, or that he had some other motive in mind. It does not indicate an indifference to spirituality, however, since the inversion depends upon setting itself against the religious norm. Accordingly, throughout this chapter there will be opportunity to observe both how Leonardo conforms to and strays from spiritual and moral norms.

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39 Ibid., 61. "Dal quel che ride a quel che piange non si varia nè occhi, nè bocca, nè guance, ma solo la rigidità delle ciglia che s'aggiongono a chi piange e levasi a chi ride."

40 "Il terzo grado della umiltá si è: non esser pronto a ridere agevolmente." Passavanti, *Lo Specchio della vera penitenza*, 728.

41 "La letizia delle cose temporali e corporali . . . è simile alla letizia de' farnetici che ridendo muoiono." Simone Fidati da Cascia, *La Vita Cristiana*, 641. Da Cascia, however, like Augustine, accepts that there is good happiness and improper happiness.

42 "essendo cosa più tosto da far ridere che compungere." Giovanni Andrea Gilio da Fabriano, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de'pittori circa l'istorie*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: G. Laterza, 1961), 2: 71.

43 See Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 29, for Richter's discussion of Lomazzo's account of this painting.

In the above examples, Leonardo values painting's ability to communicate its meaning to viewers, as evident in the emotions it stirs. Likewise, spiritual themes emerge in discussions of the communicative efficacy of paintings, which, Leonardo posits, speak through images of nature: the natural world is a kind of language that speaks to mankind of its maker. In this chapter, therefore, I study the metaphor "the world is a book written by God for man to read" as a lens through which we may perceive many of Leonardo's spiritual themes.[44] To preface this discussion, I will first describe some of the spiritual beliefs and assumptions about knowledge upon which this metaphor is founded.

As noted in the previous chapter, in medieval Christian philosophy, man's recognition of beauty is the recognition of God's order in the natural world.[45] This belief assumes that man perceives God's presence in the natural world through some knowledge available to him in his mind.[46] Augustine called these "Reasons," and argued that, when man judges something, he does so through the reason that has been subjoined to his mind by God.[47] On the other hand, man's soul had both higher and lower properties: it may be rational (higher—when it perceives God's presence) and sensible (lower—when it is distracted from God by sensible pleasure).[48] Hence, man has a perfect understanding of the Ideas (or Reasons), though he can never hold onto his perception of Reason

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44 On painting and metaphor, see for example Farago in Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 6; on Leonardo and poetry see Pedretti, "Il concetto di bellezza," 110 and Martin Kemp, "Leonardo da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 133 (1985).

45 See Gilson, *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, 127.

46 Ibid., 137: "It is God who fecundates our thought by His Word"; and see ibid., 110 on the goodness of the world.

47 These principles are outlined in Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus*, 46, "De ideis" (Migne, *PL* 040.0030). "Ideas, then, we can call in latin 'Forms' or 'Species' . . . But if we call them Reasons, we are of course departing from strict translation . . . yet anyone who wanted to use this word would not be straying far from the thing itself." "But the soul is denied the ability to see them [the Forms], except the rational soul, with that part of itself by which it is superior, that is, the mind itself or reason—as if with a kind of inner, intelligible face or eye of its own." This translation is from Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, 149–150.

48 "not even every rational soul is held to be capable of this vision, but rather those which are holy and pure, that is, those which have kept that eye which sees them [the Forms] healthy, whole, undisturbed." Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, 149–150. In the preceeding passage, Augustine suggests that the ability to apprehend reason is a natural ability, through a particular quality of the mind, which must be kept "healthy." In *De Trinitate*, 12.1–2, Augustine identifies this "holy and pure" part of the mind with reason, and juxtaposes reason and sense.

since he is weighed down by sense.[49] As such, whenever man seeks to express or exercise this understanding of God—for example by speaking about his reason with his own sensible, temporal language—reason is compromised by the limitations of material existence. This is a theme that is found particularly in the writings of Augustine on language, which, as shall be seen, there is reason to believe Leonardo knew. In Augustine, the words that men use are lower than God's Word, first because they are arbitrary signs created by man, and secondly because they are words that are experienced in the time needed to read, speak or hear them.[50] When spoken, read, or written, words become part of the bodily, sensible world, and hence lower than God's Word.[51]

Because man has a rational soul, he is able to perceive God in the outside world, or more accurately, man is able to judge the natural world according to God's Reason.[52] In my discussion of Alberti, I sidestepped the issue of how

49 Augustine writes: "[You should] remain in it [cognition of the Truth], if you can, but if you cannot, you will fall back into those wonted earthly thoughts. And what weight, pray, will finally cause you to fall back, if not the tenacity of the sinful desires that you have contracted and the errors of your earthly pilgrimage?" Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 8.2.3. "Ecce in ipso primo ictu quo velut coruscatione perstringeris, cum dicitur, Veritas, mane si potes: sed non potes; relaberis in ista solita atque terrena. Quo tandem pondere, quaeso relaberis, nisi sordium contractarum cupiditatis visco et peregrinationis erroribus?" Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, PL 042.0949).

50 This will be discussed in greater depth below. For example, see Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15.14–16.

51 "For this is not an utterance in which what has been said passes away that the next thing may be said and so finally the whole utterance be complete: but all in one act, yet abiding eternally: otherwise it would be but time and change and no true eternity, no true immortality." Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.7.9. "Vocas itaque nos ad intelligendum Verbum Deum apud te Deum, quod sempiterne dicitur, et eo sempiterne dicuntur omnia: neque enim finitur quod dicebatur, et dicitur aliud ut possint dici omnia; sed simul ac sempiterne omni. Alioquin jam tempus et mutatio, et non vera aeternitas, nec vera immortalitas." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, PL 032.0812).

52 "Nor can there be any hesitation in identifying the unchanging nature which is above the rational soul with God . . . This, you see, is the unchanging Truth which is rightly said to be the law of all arts and crafts . . . And so the soul, being well aware that it does not judge the looks and motions of bodies by the standard of itself, must at the same time acknowledge that, just as its own nature excels the nature it makes judgments on, so too is it excelled itself by the nature according to which it makes such judgments." Augustine, *True Religion*, trans. Edmund Hill, in *On Christian Belief*, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005), 31.57. "Nec jam illud ambigendum est, incommutabilem naturam, quae supra rationalem animam sit, Deum esse; et ibi esse primam vitam et primam essentiam, ubi est prima sapientia. Nam haec illa incommutabilis veritas, quae lex omnium artium recte dicitur . . . Itaque cum se anima sentiat nec corporum speciem

man was able to recognize beauty (God), noting only that the mind could perceive beauty when not attached to nature for the sake of body. More accurately, beauty is recognizable by man because he can judge with his rational soul, which leans upon the Reason of God. However, judgment fails inasmuch as it becomes attached to nature for its material properties. Leonardo's concept of judgment is in keeping with this vulgate Christian philosophy: man's judgment has reason; judgment errs, however, because man is both a rational and sensible being.[53] Therefore, considering this philosophy through metaphors of reading, it could be said that man is able to read the natural world using the language—the Word—that God has given to the mind of man: his reason. Having judged and understood nature, however, man can only speak about God with the imperfect languages created by himself. If man, on the other hand, could retain his perfect understanding, and not become lost in his sensible nature, his closeness to God would be complete. For Augustine, this was characteristic of a mystical experience.[54] For Leonardo, as will be demonstrated, this was similar to the experience of perfect painting. Although I do not argue that Leonardo believed that painting was divine in the sense of being supernatural, the terms with which he celebrates painting resonate with many themes in the spiritual literature of his time, suggesting that we must view his ideas on art in relation to spiritual concepts.

The World Is a Book

The metaphor "the world is a book written by God for man to read" was used commonly in medieval and Early Modern Europe. Words, things and God are conflated in this metaphor, as they are in the Gospel of John, where it is written that: "the Word was God . . . all things came into being through him" (1:1–3).

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motumque judicare secundum seipsam, simul oportet agnoscat praestare suam naturam ei naturae de qua judicat; praestare autem sibi eam natura, secundm quam judicat, et de qua judicare null modo potest." Augustine, *De vera religione* (Migne, *PL* 034.0147)

53 For example, Augustine writes: "This law, though, governing all the arts, is altogether unchanging, while the human mind, to which has been granted a sight of it, can undergo changes and chances of error; hence it is sufficiently clear that this law is above our minds and that its name is Truth." Augustine, *True Religion*, 30.56. "Haec autem lex omnium artium cum sit omnino incommutabilis, mens vero humana cui talem legem videre concessum est, mutabilitatem pati possit erroris, satis apparet supra mentem nostram esse legem, quae veritas dicitur." Augustine, *De vera religione* (Migne, *PL* 034.0147).

54 On Augustine's mysticism, see McGuinn, *Presence of God*, 1:229–232.

The threefold relationship between God, words and things gave birth to several ideas concerning the nature of language and signs, and man's ability to understand God through nature. In this chapter I look at how man can read nature using the interior language of reason and judgment. Augustine, an early exponent of this tradition, preached (albeit in a sermon there is no evidence that Leonardo knew) that the material world was like a book written by God for man to read: "some people read books in order to find God. Yet there is a great book, the very appearance of created things."[55] He exhorted men to read the book that "he set before [man's] eyes, [being] the things that he made."[56] In line with this tradition, Leonardo treated the natural world as a vestige of God, its creator.[57] He writes that "painters who . . . study . . . nature's works . . . [find] the way to understand the Creator of so many admirable things, and this is the way to love such a great Inventor."[58] Moreover, the painterly study of nature was conducted in much the same way that one reads a book:

> In an instant we see an infinite number of forms; nevertheless we only take in one object at a time. Suppose that you, reader, were to glance rapidly at the whole of this written page, you would instantly perceive that it was covered with various letters; but you could not, in the time, recognize what the letters were, nor what they were meant to tell. Hence you would need to see them word by word, line by line, to be able to understand the letters. Again, if you wish to go to the top of a building you must go up step by step; otherwise it will be impossible that you should reach the top. Thus I say to you, whom nature prompts to pursue this art [of painting], if you wish to have a sound knowledge of the forms of objects, begin with the details of them, and do not go on to the second till you have the first well fixed in memory and in practice.[59]

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55 Augustine, *The Essential Augustine*, ed. V.J. Bourke, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1974), 123. This is from Augustine's *Sermon*, Mai 126.6.

56 Ibid., 123.

57 Giorgio Castelfranco attributes this sentiment to Stoic philosophy, see "Introduzione a Leonardo," in *Studi Vinciana* (Rome: De Luca, 1966), 32.

58 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 80. "li pittori, li quali studiano . . . cose appartenenti alla vera cognizione di tutte le figure ch'hanno le opere di natura . . . ché questo è 'l modo di conoscere l'operatore di tante mirabili cose, e quest'è 'l modo d'amare un tanto inventore." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 77.

59 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 305, no. 491. "Noi conosciamo chiaramente che la vista è delle veloci operationi che sia, ed in un punto vede infinite forme: niente di meno non comprende se non una cosa per volta; Poniamo caso tu lettore guarderai in una occhiata tutta questa carta scritta, e subito giudicherai questa esser piena di varie lettere, ma non con-

The painter thus reads the world with time and in order, not simply looking at nature as one might look at a page of writing without reading it. Leonardo conflates the progress of reading piece by piece with upward movement, as though moving toward the top of a building: the eye that truly reads the world is not simply looking at one different object after the other, but moving in a particular direction. In painting as in reading, Leonardo implies, the painter uses her or his memory since it is impossible to understand what one is reading without remembering the passage as a whole.

Augustine uses a similar example to demonstrate the proper orientation of the soul toward nature. Leonardo may or may not have known this passage, but being from *De Trinitate*, it was in one of Augustine's most well-read treatises; as such, a comparison of the two texts illuminates some of the literary traditions with which Leonardo's thoughts resonate. Augustine teaches that one must inflect his or her will toward nature in a manner similar to the process of reading. Explaining how he often fails to take notice of the meaning of a text when reading, he admits that he frequently has "to read it again. For when the attention of the will is centered on something else, then the memory is not so applied to the sense of the body as the sense itself is applied to the letters."[60] Augustine finishes his thought, noting how, just as some people read without paying attention, others go walking with their "will . . . fixed on something else [and] do not know where they have got to."[61] As Margaret Miles has discussed, Augustine uses bodily vision as a metaphor for spiritual vision since sight was believed to require a more active intention on the part of the viewer in order to form an attachment between subject and object; the effort of

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oscierai in questo tempo che le lettere sieno, nè che voglino dire, onde ti bisogna fare a parola a parola, verso per verso, a voler aver notitia d'esse letter; Ancora se vorai montare all'altezza d'uno edifitio ti converrà salire a grado a grado, altrimente fia impossibile pervenire alla sua altezza; così dico a te il quale la natura volgie a questa arte, se vuoi aver vera notitia delle forme delle cose, comincierai alle particule di quelle e non andare alla seconda, se prima non ài bene nella memoria e nella pratica la prima."

60 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 11.8.15. "Nam et legentibus evenit, et mihi saepissime, ut perlecta pagina vel epistola nesciam quid legerim, et repetam. In aliud quippe intento nutu voluntatis, non sic est adhibita memoria sensui corporis, quomodo ipse sensus adhibitus est litteris." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.0996).

61 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 11.8.15 "Ita et ambulantes intenta in aliud voluntate, nesciunt qua transierint: quod si non vidissent, non ambulassent, aut majore intentione palpadno ambulassent, praesertim si per incognita paergernt." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.0996).

sight is evident in the above passages.[62] The effort of physical vision appears also in Leonardo, who describes people walking through fields absent-mindedly, and he reproves artists who "take exercise in walking; and yet . . . retain such a weariness of mind that they . . . are unaware of different objects;" consequently, Leonardo instructs that "as you go through the fields, turn your attention to various objects . . . making a bundle/bouquet of the various things elected and chosen from those that are less good."[63] Leonardo's "bundle" emphasizes the painter's need to memorize the objects he is studying for future use, highlighting the effort required of attentive sight. With these words, he also recalls a well-known trope in moral literature, in which a gathering of lessons from spiritual texts was like a bouquet of flowers.[64] Leonardo would have been familiar with this commonplace from the *Fior di virtù*, amongst other books, in which Tommaso Gozzadini claims that his book has been made "like he who in a great meadow, where there are many diverse and varied flowers, elects the nicest of the tops of flowers to make his garland nice and beautiful."[65] The concept of study while walking is also recalled by Cecco d'Ascoli in *L'Acerba*, where he writes that men "who go bent and looking to the ground are either avaricious or of subtle mind."[66] But the metaphor was common, and indeed was the guiding principle behind the ancient, classical genre of literature known as the *florilegium*, of which *Fior di virtù* was an example.[67]

Careful study meant necessarily having nothing else on one's mind. For this reason Leonardo recommended solitary study away from companions

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62 See Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's 'De trinitate' and 'Confessions,' " *The Journal of Religion* 63 (1983).

63 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 310–311, no. 506. "a onde andando tu per campagnie fa che 'l tuo giuditio si volti a vari obietti e di mano in mano riguardare or questa cosa ora quell'altra faciendo un fascio di varie cose elette e scielte infra le men bone; E non facci come alcuni pittori, i quali, stanchi colla lor fantasia, dismettono l'opera e fanno esercitio col andare a sollazzo riserbandosi una stanchezza nella mente, la quale non che veggano o pongan in mente varie cose, ma spesse volte scontrando li amici e parenti essendo da quelli salutati non che li vedino o sentino, non altrementi sono cogniosciuti, come s'elli scontrassino latre tant'aria."

64 I have elsewhere discussed this passage with respect to artistic imitation in my "Artistic Devotion."

65 "ho facto come colui chie in uno prato grandissimo dove sonno diverse e varie fiori: e legie sempre le piu digne cime: per fare la sua girlanda piu gentile e bella." Tommaso Gozzadini, *Fior di virtù* (Venice, 1518, though several earlier editions), preface, 2r.

66 "L'uomo guardando in terra che va chino,/ O egli è avaro, o di sottile ingegno." Stabili [Cecco D'Ascoli], *L'Acerba*, 965.

67 On the florilegium and monasticism, see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 182–184.

to prevent being distracted by "listening often to their chatter," as a result of which, "since one cannot serve two masters, [the painter] will badly fill the part of a companion, and carry out [his or her] studies of art even worse"; the painter must therefore "withdraw so far that their words cannot reach" him or her.[68] The phrase "one cannot serve two masters" is notable for being a citation from both the Gospels of Matthew (6:24) and Luke (16:13).[69] With these words, Christ instructs men and women to attend to spiritual rather than worldly wealth, arguing that one cannot be devoted to God while also a slave to wealth. Matthew uses the saying to contrast the interior will of man with exterior action, noting that Christ instructs men and women to practice their faith and prayers for God privately, rather than to perform their faith for others as an outward display (Matthew, 6:2–13). By using this citation, Leonardo emphasizes the spiritual, prayerful aspect of a painter's study and hence the need for solitude. In addition to studying alone, Leonardo elsewhere recommends that painters ought not to study in a large room since "small rooms or dwellings reorder the mind, large ones distract it."[70] Small rooms, typical for religious contemplative life, are conducive to meditation, and, for instance, in (pseudo-)Augustine's book of sermons, supposedly composed for members of his order, he reminds the listeners that their home is "not in the piazza, but in the cell."[71] This exhortation comes in a sermon on the virtue of silence, in which he likewise instructs that they do "not need to have conversation with worldly people."[72] Within the books possibly available to Leonardo, therefore, the silence and solitude of study had a spiritual purpose.

It is well known that Leonardo suggested painters study all of nature to obtain a universal knowledge of the world. To express this concept, he writes that "the mind of the painter must resemble a mirror, which always takes the

68 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 306–307, no. 494. "mi tirerò in parte per potere meglio speculare le forme delle cose naturali, dico questo potersi mal fare perché non potresti fare che spesso non prestassi orecchio alle loro ciancie. E non si potendo servire a 2 signori; tu faresti male l'ufitioio della compagno e peggio l'effetto della speculatione de l'arte."

69 "Nemo potest duobus dominis servire." (Matthew 6:24, Latin Vulgate). "Nemo servus potest duobus dominis servire." (Luke 16:13, Latin Vulgate). The Bible appears on both book lists. See Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 336, no. 1469 and also Reti, "Two Unpublished Manuscripts," 81.

70 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 313, no. 509. "Le staze overo abitationi piccole ravia lo ingegno et le gradi lo suiano."

71 "Non e latua habitatione impiazza ma in cella." Agustine, *Sermones*, "Sermone di Silentio."

72 "Et non debbe essere latua conversatione fra lagente mondana poi che se uscito del mondo." Ibid., "Sermone di Silentio."

color of the object it reflects."[73] In another passage he asserts that the mind must be "equal in nature to the surface of the mirror which assumes colors as various as those of the different objects."[74] Painters who focus unduly on one aspect of nature at the expense of others have "an *ingegno* [that] has been reduced to a small range . . . like the concave mirror . . . concentrated in a small space."[75] The painter, therefore, who gives too much attention to one object has a mind like a curved mirror, concentrating too strongly on some objects, a misplaced attention stemming from inappropriate love: "all love that is placed in one part misses/betrays the whole."[76] References to mirrors are legion in spiritual writings of the Middle Ages and Renaissance; however, amongst these some are particularly relevant to Leonardo's recommendation to painters. For instance, in a sermon, Giordano da Pisa argues that the soul is a mirror which sees by the light of reason and understanding; therefore, through the knowledge of God, one may see reflected in the mirror of the soul the whole of creation with much greater clarity.[77] Giordano da Pisa, thus, posits a relationship between a complete physical and spiritual vision, and piety. Although we have

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73 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 310, no. 506. "Lo ingiegnio del pittore vol essere a similitudine dello specchio, jl quale senpre si trasmuta nel colore di quella cosa ch'eli à per obietto, e di tante similitudini s'enpie, quante sono le cose che gli sono contraposte."

74 Ibid., 1: 306, no. 493. "e ciervello mutabile secondo la variatione delli obbietti, che dinanti se li oppongono e remoto da altre cure."

75 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 92. "Essendo la potenza di tale ingegno ridotta in poco spazio, non ha potenza nella dilatazione, e fa questo ingegno a similitudine dello specchio concavo, il quale pigliando li raggi del sole, quando riflette essa quantità di raggi in maggiore somma di dilatazione, li rifletterà con piú tepida caldezza, e quando esso le riflette tutti in minore luogo, allora tali raggi sono d'immensa caldezza, ma adopera in poco luogo." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 5.

76 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 92. "e tutto l'amore ch'è posto a una parte manca 'l tutto, perché s'è unito tutto il suo diletto in quella cosa sola, abbandonando l'universale pel particulare." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 5.

77 "Simiglantemente l'anima è anche specchio, onde ciò che l'anima vede per lume di ragione e d'intendimento, sí vede per specchio, ché lo 'ntendimento è specchio dell'anima. E per questa ragione ti mostro che, vedendo Iddio, vedrai tutte le criature a uno tratto molto piú perfettamente che tu non vedi cogli occhi del corpo la cosa presenttamente; imperò che gli occhi nostri,—questo specchio è bugiardo e fallace, ché s'io sono dalla lunga alla cosa, sí mi pare piccola; quanto piú m'appresso, maggior mi pare, e quando ci pongo bene gli occhi, allora veggio molte cose, le quali io non vedea prima. . . . ma vedendo Iddio quello specchio universale, quello esemplario chiarissimo, ove tutte le cose risplendono, sí vedrò tutte le criature veramente come sono in quantitá, in qualitá . . ." Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche*, in *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, ed. Arrigo Levasti (Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1935), 496–497.

no record of Leonardo having owned this sermon (though he seems to have collected a number of books of sermons), being dispersed orally as it was by Giordano da Pisa implies that it may have been a widely disseminated idea. Giordano da Pisa is a particularly compelling example since he, in the same sermon, compares God's creation of nature to the painter's imitation of nature, noting that painters take pleasure in understanding nature, rather than imitating it: "the master, after he has made the picture, does not care for it, but takes pleasure in that which he had in himself first through understanding."[78] The inappropriate love of painters with minds like concave mirrors reiterates the point that painters must be passionate not for objects but for understanding.

In Leonardo's manuscripts the issue of painterly love, a topic he discusses amply, conforms to the principles of Christian love. For instance, in an early manuscript, from around 1492, Leonardo justifies his love for studying nature by writing that study increases love, stating that "great love is born of great knowledge of the thing that is loved, and if you do not know it, you can love it little or not at all."[79] Given that Leonardo believed God was known through nature, painterly study would therefore lead to greater understanding of God. With these words, thus, the issue of painterly love is linked with the Christian ideal of love, as Carlo Pedretti has demonstrated in an article on the Augustinian echoes of this passage.[80] Though I will consider Augustine below, it seems likely that Leonardo was also familiar with this concept from the *Fior di virtù*, which states that love arises from cognition. The issue discussed in the *Fior* is clearly how to love God properly, the author confirming Leonardo's opinion that such love needs knowledge:

> as St. Augustine says in his book of the Trinity, no person can love anything if first he does not have some cognition of that thing, and this knowledge proceeds from the five principle senses of the body . . . And [it] proceeds also from a part other than the body: that is from the intellect, which is

78 "Il maestro che dipigne o che fa l'arca è mistieri che in lui sia una arca, o quella figura la quale è piú nobile che quella di fuori, e piú ne gode. Il maestro, poi che ha fatta la dipintura, non ne cura egli, ma gode di quella c'ha in sé per la scienzia prima." Ibid., 496.

79 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 80. ". . . Il grand'amore nasce dalla gran cognitione della cosa che si ama, e se tu non la cognoscerai poco o nulla la potrai amare." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 78.

80 These Augustinian qualities have been noted by Pedretti, "Il concetto di bellezza," 110.

> in the imagining of the intellect, and this knowledge (*cognoscentia*) is the first cause and the beginning of love.[81]

Therefore, understanding arises from both intellect and sense, but is present to the intellect first. Though Gozzadini's wording is ambiguous (does he mean that only reason is the first cause of love, or the senses as well?), his source was not: in Augustine's philosophy, the principles of science were known first in the mind and then perfected by the senses; reason existed first in the mind to guide the senses, which would not know how to pursue a science if they did not have some prior understanding, obscure though it may be, to guide them.[82] The idea is similarly vulgarized in the book of Augustine's sermons: "God gives the spirit of knowledge for which [the soul] begins to know God . . . and then the soul, so illuminated . . . knows God with clear faith . . . [and] loves him with all its heart . . . its intellect so illuminated that it sees the truth in all things."[83] The passage upon which Gozzadini based this idea is found in Augustine's *De Trinitate*, in which the Latin father writes: "no studious person . . . loves the unknown . . . for he . . . already knows generically what he loves, and is now eager to know it in some particular . . . we love something known, and on account of it, we seek something unknown."[84] This Neoplatonic

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81 "lo primo movimento de ciaschuno amor sie la cognitione dela cosa: come dice Sancto Augustino nel suo libro dela trinita: che niuna persona po amar alchuna cosa se primamente non ha qualche cognitione di quella cosa. Eprocede questo cognoscimento da cinque sentimenti principali del corpo de le persone . . . Et procede anchora daltra parte cha da lo corpo: cioe da lo seno intellectivo chie nel imaginar de litellecto e questa cognoscentia sie la prima causa: & el primo principio de lamore." Gozzadini, *Fior di virtù*, 2v. This passage is noted by Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1172, and Solmi, *Le fonti dei manoscriti*, 156.

82 The *Fiore* author synthesizes Augustine's ideas in a way that Augustine himself may not have approved by placing sense and intellectual understanding on an equal footing.

83 "idio dona lospirito della sapientia: per loquale chomincia a conoscere idio & lasua misericorida & bonta. Et poi lanima chosi ralluminata & cosi raffrenata del dono del spirito sancto chonosce idio con charita & fede conoscendo tanto thesoro dello amore divino sipropone damarlo con tucto ilcuore. Et cosi vipersevera: perche losuo intellecto cosi alluminiato vede laverita in tucte lechose: & vede in tucte lechose non trovare niuna migliore che idio." Agustine, *Sermones*, "Sermoni contro aparlanti."

84 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 10.2.4. "Quilibet igitur studiosus, quilibet curiosus non amat incognita, etiam cum ardentissimo appetitue instat scire quod nescit. Aut enim jam genere notum habet quod amat, idque nosse expetit, etiam in aliqua re singula, vel in singulis rebus, quae illi nondum notae forte laudanture, fingituque animo imaginariam formam qua excitetur in amorem." "aut aliquid notum amamus propter quod ignotum aliquid quaerimus: cujus ignoti amor nequaquam nos tenet, sed illiud cogniti, quo

philosophical premise is also a spiritual imperative: it exhorts that through study of the material world we must perfect the interior knowledge of God with which we are born. We study nature to understand that which we perceive dimly within ourselves: God's presence. Therefore, in study we should attend both to nature and the interior reason of God, which guides us. Leonardo concludes the above-quoted passage on love by clarifying that

> If you love Him for the good that you expect, and not because of His supreme goodness, you act like the dog who wags his tail, fawns, and leaps toward him who may give the dog a bone. But if he knew the goodness of such a man and that goodness were directed to him, he would love the man even more.[85]

This reiterates the pious nature of love, which one undertakes not for external reward but for the sake of God. Again, a likely inspiration is the *Fior di virtù*: Gozzadini, citing Augustine, writes that the senses provide understanding though the resulting love must be directed to God, whose beauty our study enables us to see: "St. Augustine says . . . rest your heart in the love of God, and not in the misery and shame of this world . . . he who loves God always lives with God with great joy and peace."[86] Even Leonardo's image of the dog seems to be suggested by a later chapter of the *Fior*, where a dog chasing a treat is likened to men who make friends only for the good that they can obtain from them.[87] Leonardo's terms for discussing love seem to arise in part, therefore, by weaving together various themes and images derived from the popular spiritual literature he owned.

As mentioned, the belief that reason is known first internally, and then expanded in study through love, implies a Neoplatonic philosophy in which reason is *a priori*. Earlier scholars traced these Neoplatonic themes in Leonardo's writings to the Neoplatonic academy itself: an early aphorism on love, which

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pertinere novimus, ut illud etiam quod adhuc ignotum quaerimus, noverimus." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.0974).

85 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 80. "E se tu l'ami per il bene che t'aspetti da lei, e non per la somma sua virtù, tu fai com'il cane che mena la coda e fa festa alzandosi verso colui che li pò dar un osso, ma se conoscessi la virtù di tale uomo l'amerebbe assai più, se tal virtù fossi al suo proposito." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 78.

86 "Sancto augustino dice . . . firma el tuo core in lamor de dio: e non nela miseria: e vituperio de questo mondo . . . ma colui che ama dio sempre habita con dio come summo gaudio e suma pace." Gozzadini, *Fiore di virtù*, 4r–v.

87 Ibid., 20v. "Isopo dice: el cane ama losso si che truova da spelizar & le ape ama el fiore fine chele bello."

does not seem to pertain directly to his theory of art, has inspired much debate about the possible influence of Neoplatonic philosophy and Ficino. This passage, however, when read in the context of Leonardo's spiritual books, does not seem to betray a relationship closer to Neoplatonism beyond what had already been available in Christian texts for centuries.[88] The passage reads:

> The lover moves towards the thing loved as the sensible object moves into the senses, and with it they unite and make one same thing; the work is the first thing that is born from the union; if the thing loved is vile, the lover is made vile; when the loved thing is well formed to its uniter, there follows delight, pleasure and satisfaction. When the lover is joined to the beloved, there it rests; when the weight is laid down there it rests. The thing remains, known, with our intellect.[89]

Admittedly, the passage is both vague and suggestive, encouraging many interpretations, and so ascribing it to one source is perilous.[90] Accordingly, I do not wish to attribute it to any one new source, but rather to illustrate how common

88 See Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1202. On Neoplatonism in this passage, see Giuseppina Fumagalli, *Eros di Leonardo* (Milan: Garzanti, 1952), 215–218. Regarding Leonardo and Neoplatonism in general see Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence*, 8–12. Eugenio Garin, "Il problema delle fonti del pensiero di Leonardo," in *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento Italiano* (Florence: Sansoni, 1961), outlines a Stoic, Leonardesque philosophy, derived possibly from Cicero and Seneca, amongst others; see especially 398n2. Castelfranco, "Introduzione a Leonardo," also presents a Stoic view of Leonardo, though he does not attempt to trace his sources; see 32–33. Kemp, "Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se," 321n16, argues that Neoplatonism was abandoned later in Leonardo's career. Martin Kemp, " 'Il Concetto dell'Anima' in Leonardo's Early Skull Studies" *Journal of the Warbug and Courtauld Institutes*, 34 (1971), 129, writes that Leonardo's concept of the soul's harmony has some Neoplatonic elements, but that Leonardo was not concerned with Neoplatonic intellectual contemplation.

89 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 249, no. 1202. "Muovesi l'amante per la cosa amata come il senso e lo sensibile, e con seco s'uniscie e fassi una cosa medesima; l'opera è la prima cosa che nasce dall'unione; se la cosa amata è vile, l'amante si fa vile; Quando la cosa unita è conveniente al suo unitore, li sequita dilettatione e piacere e soddisfatione; Quando l'amante è giunto all' amanto, lì si riposa; quando il peso è posato lì si riposa." The last line is given in Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1202: "la coso s[t]a chogniuscivta chol nostro intelletto."

90 Kemp, "Science and the Poetic Impulse," 199, suggests two other possible sources: Dionisius, *Divinis nominibus* and Dante, *Convivio*. Fumagalli, *Eros di Leonardo*, 217 considers a text by Leone l'Ebreo, though does not suggest it was the source. On Leonardo in the context of Ficino, see Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence*, 419–421.

such ideas were in the spiritual literature of the time. Similar ideas for instance are expressed in the *Fior di virtù*, in which St. Augustine and St. Bernard are quoted saying "love is nothing else but a transformation into the thing loved for a transformation of similitude."[91] Again, in a chapter on love from *L'Acerba*, love "transforms the soul into the thing loved."[92] It must have been one of the most common precepts of the time; it is found in a sermon by Giordano da Pisa, who preaches: "love is a passion of the soul that transforms the lover into the beloved."[93] Giordano da Pisa's sermon is once again a close match, as he continues to explain that love for vile things makes the lover "more vile and more evil" since these things "are not of [the soul's] nature."[94] One must conclude that Leonardo's early thoughts on love conform to the spiritual tradition of his time, in turn shaping his theory of painting.

As he matured, Leonardo does not seem to have rejected the Christian principles that underlie these thoughts, though he eventually expanded them. Similar sentiments appear in a later passage, in which he writes that "nothing can be loved or hated unless it is first known."[95] Likewise, in a later discourse written around 1513, Leonardo again defends the study of nature (in this case, referring specifically to anatomical study), relying still on the principle that love grows from knowledge:

> Abbreviators do harm to knowledge and to love, seeing that the love of anything is the offspring of this knowledge, the love being the more fervent in proportion as the knowledge is more certain. And this certainty is born of a complete knowledge of all the parts, which, when combined,

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91 "Sancto Augustino & sancto Bernardo: & anche Vgo nel libro de response dice che amore non e altro che transformarse in la cosa amata per trasformatione similitudine con formita de vivere." Gozzadini, *Fiore di virtù*, 6v.

92 "Dal terzo ciel si muove tal virtute,/ Che fa due corpi una cosa animata/ Sentendo pene di dolci ferute./ Conformità di stelle muove affett,/ Trasforma l'alma nella cosa amata/ Non varïando l'esser del soggetto." Cecco D'Ascoli, *L'Acerba*, 1911.

93 "L'amore è una passione nell'anima c'hae trasformare l'amante nell'amato." Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche*, 522.

94 "E la ragione è, però che queste cose sono contro alla natura dell'anima, non sono di sua natura." "Ché quanto piú infondi l'amore tuo in queste cose, tanto se' peggiore e piú vile e piú cattivo." Ibid., 525–526.

95 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 244, no. 1172. "L'acquisto di qualunche cognitione è sempre vtile allo intelletto, perchè potrà scacciare da sé le cose inutili e riservare le buone; Perchè nessuna cosa si può amare nè odiare se prima non si à cognition di quella." Pedretti, *Commentary*, no. 1172, dates the text to c. 1515 and notes a similarity to passages in the *Fiore*.

> compose the totality of the thing which ought to be loved. Of what use then is he who abridges the details of those matters of which he professes to give thorough information, while he leaves behind the chief part of the things of which the whole is composed? It is true that impatience, the mother of stupidity, praises brevity, as if such persons had not life long enough to serve them to acquire a complete knowledge of one single subject, such as the human body; and then they want to comprehend the mind of God in which the universe is included, weighing it minutely and mincing it into infinite parts, as if they had to dissect it![96]

Love, therefore, grows as the student begins to understand the whole in relation to the parts, providing a more reliable way to study God's works than the speculations of theology.[97] Parts of Leonardo's sentiments here seem to respond to, and refute the ideas promulgated by, the simplistic spiritual books he owned. For instance, Augustine discourages monks from trying to understand God "because we will never be able to understand his immeasurable greatness and his eternity . . . and if we wish to see how the Holy Spirit contains everything . . . even our reason will miss fail to comprehend."[98] Piety requires only the simplicity of faith and not complex scientific or theological understanding. The immensity of the tasks is juxtaposed with "the philosopher [who] studies many years to understand the nature of a bee and cannot."[99]

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96 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2: 250–251, no. 1210. "I abreviatori delle opere fanno ingiuria alla cognitione e allo amore, conciosiachè l'amore di qualunche cosa è figliuolo d'essa cognitione, e l'amore è tanto più fervente, quanto la cognitione è più certa, la qual certezza nascie dalla cognitione intergrale di tutte quelle parti le quali, essendo insieme unite, conpongono il tutto di quelle cose che debbono essere amate; che vale a quel, che per abreviare le parti di qulle cose che lui fa professione di darne integral notitia, che lui lascia indietro la maggiore parte delle cose, di che il tutto è composto? Egli è ero che la inpatientia, madre della stoltitia, è quella che lauda la brevità; come se questi tali non avessino tanto di vita, che li servisse a potere avere una intera notitia d'un sol particulare come è un corpo umano! E poi vogliono abracciare le mente di dio nella quale s'include l'universo, caratando e minuzzando quella in infinite parti, come se l'avessino anatomizzate."

97 See Fumagalli, *Eros di Leonardo*, 213, where Florentine Neoplatonism is rejected as a source for these ideas.

98 "O frati mia se noi vogliamo parlare altamente, lasciamo ogni altra cosa peroche mai non potremo agiugnere di comprender lasua smisurata grandeza, lasua eternita ogni mente humana civiene meno. Ee se noi vogliamo vedere come lospirito sancto contiene ogni cosa & non e contenuto: anche lanostra ragione manchera accio comprendere." Agustine, *Sermones*, "Sermoni contro aparlanti."

99 "El philosopho studio molti anni per comprehendere lanatura duna ape & non pote." Ibid., "Sermoni contro aparlanti."

Although Leonardo agrees that it is futile to "want to comprehend the mind of God" he inverts the common spiritual belief by arguing instead that knowledge of nature is much more attainable. Though we can perceive the foundations of this idea in the spiritual and moral books described above, Leonardo departs from them by encouraging what others might have condemned as "curious" knowledge. Leonardo appears in this passage to speak out against the writers of encyclopedic tracts who abbreviate material (many such books were owned by Leonardo: Isidore's *Chronicle*, for instance); however, his words also take issue with sentiments found in the very spiritual books he owned and in the precepts he drew from them. Leonardo's ideas on painterly study, therefore, reflect common ideals of spiritual contemplation, the terms of his theory responding to a discourse that held knowledge of God at the center of all worldly activity.

Judgment and Love: Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se

In the popular texts owned by Leonardo, to love properly was to love for God's sake, though it was not always clear when one was successfully loving in this way. To love, one must use judgment to discern the proper object of one's charity. For example, to hear about the life of a just man, and then to recognize and love it as a just life, was to judge that life according to the form of Justice that resides within the soul. Justice was a truth known to the soul that all men were capable of perceiving even if all men were not just themselves.[100] Such a philosophy of knowledge is evident, though in a confused way, for instance, in the *Fior di virtù*: if anyone wants "to know virtue from vice, one must look simply [to see] if that which one wishes to do is moved from the virtue of love: either yes or no."[101]

In the Christian philosophy from which these ideas descend, man's ability to form judgments was not limited to knowledge of Christian virtues; one could also judge the objects of the visible world. To see and pass judgment on an object was to exercise reason, given to man by God: Augustine, for instance, writes "that is why I judge that those correspondences I perceive with the eyes are all the better the nearer they approach, within the limits of

100 See, for example Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 8.6.9.

101 "e per tanto ciascuno che senza errore vol cognoscere la virtu dali vitii: guarda prima si quello che vol far se move da virtu damore o no: & cosi potra cognoscere la verita." Gozzadini, *Fiore di virtù*, 2v.

nature, those I understand with the intellect."[102] On more than one occasion, Augustine speaks of the correct judgment of architecture, noting that "if you do not possess this [skill of architecture], you can still make judgments about its artefacts,"[103] and the products of artists could be similarly judged since an artist "sees inwardly what he is to produce exteriorly . . . so that the mind may judge by the truth which presides within it whether the work is well done."[104]

Physical beauty, therefore, was something of which all humans had knowledge. This is one source for the long tradition in Renaissance art theory, from Alberti onwards, of according ordinary men the ability to judge works of art despite not having the skill to create them.[105] Alberti writes that "while the work is in progress, any chance spectator should be welcomed and their judgments heard,"[106] and even with respect to architecture he believed that "some natural instinct allows . . . learned and ignorant alike, to sense immediately what is right or wrong in the execution and design of a work."[107] Similar sentiments are raised by Alberti's sixteenth-century successors, Paolo Pino and Ludovico Dolce, to name but two.[108] Leonardo retains the same faith in man's natural

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102 Augustine, *True Religion*, 31.57. "Possum enim dicere quare similia sibi ex utraque parte respondere membra cujusque corporis debeant; quia summa aequalitate delector, quam non oculis, sed menti contueor: quapropter tanto meliora esse judico quae oculis cerno, quanto pro sua natura viciniora sunt iis quae animo intelligo." Augustine, *De vera religione* (Migne, *PL* 034.0147). See also Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.27.

103 Augustine, *True Religion*, 30.54. "quo si careas, judicare de operibus possis, quod multo est excellentius, quamvis operari artificiosa non possis." Augustine, *De vera religione* (Migne, *PL* 034.0146).

104 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.5.7. "Tu fabro corpus, tu animum membris imperitantem fecisti, tu materiam unde facit aliquid, tu ingenium quo artem capiat et videat intus quid faciat foris, tu sensum corporis quo interprete trajiciat ab animo ad materiam id quod facit, et renuntiet animo quid factum sit, ut ille intus consulat praesidentem sibi veritatem, an bene factum sit." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, *PL* 032.0182).

105 For a discussion of this theme, looking particularly at its Ciceronian heritage, see Summers, *The Judgment of Sense*, chapter 7. Summers also discusses Leonardo's theory of judgment in the context of medieval theories of vision in chapter 8.

106 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.62. "Nostros ergo pictores palam et audire saepius et rogare omnes quid sentiant volo, quandoquidem id cum ad caeteras res tum ad gratiam pictori aucupandam valet." "odano ciascuno quello che giudichi, e gioveralli questo ad acquistare grazia." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.62.

107 Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, 2.1. "Ac mirum quidem, quid ita sit, cur monente natura et docti et indocti omnes, in artibus et rationibus rerum quidnam insit aut recti aut pravi, confestim sentimus." Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, 2.1.

108 See, for example, Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura di Messer Paolo Pino*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960), 1: 98.

judgment when he advises artists "not to shrink from hearing every opinion," given that "men are competent to judge of the works of nature . . . [and therefore] can judge of our errors since . . . a man may be deceived in his own work."[109] The intellectual traditions within which Leonardo's ideas emerge regarding the judgment of sense have been considered with respect to the writings of his near contemporaries, such as Pico della Mirandola, and regarding their relationship to Leonardo's theory of beauty and proportion.[110] However, some scholars suggest that Leonardo departed from the Albertian philosophy by emphasizing the extent to which man's judgment could fail and deceive him.[111] The above citation makes it clear, however, that Leonardo shared a point of view similar to Alberti, though, as will be seen, Leonardo does emphasize the possibility of the artist's faulty judgment. Why, then, are chance spectators accurate judges if the artist him- or herself is unable to see his or her mistakes? Why does the painter fail if man has been given the ability to judge, through reason, the faculty that was closest to God?

A widely dispersed Christian belief maintained that, as a sensible being, man becomes sinfully attached to the pleasures of sense, thus obscuring his rational judgment: the judgment of sense is compromised by improper love of sense.[112] Judgment is the exercise of reason that is higher than oneself, but errs inasmuch as one becomes attached to temporal and changeable things.[113] Alberti, we have seen, thus encourages painters to turn away from material objects as they paint. Likewise, Leonardo recommends a similar retreat from sense to retain judgment: "when you are painting, you should have a flat mirror and often look at your work as reflected in it, and it will appear to you like some

109 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 322, no. 532. "Ciertamen non è di recusare, in mentre che l'omo dipignie, il giuditio di ciascuno, imperochè noi consciamo che l'omo benchè non sia pittore, avrà notitia della forma dell'altr'omo . . . e se noi conosciamo li omini potere con verità giudicare lopere della natura, quanto magiormente ci converrà confessare questi potere giudicare li nostri errori, chè sai quanto l'omo s'inganna nell'opere sua."

110 See discussion by Farago in Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 326–27.

111 See Kemp, "Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se," 314. Kemp distinguishes between Leonardo's and Alberti's theory of judgment, though I argue that each emphasized different aspects of a similar belief, whereby both found that judgment could be paradoxically both naturally correct and incorrect.

112 See Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, 12.4.

113 Castelfranco, "Leonardo Scrittore," 12–15, notes how Leonardo believed that man had understanding of reason, though he does not address the failures of judgment, which later scholars have emphasized.

other painter's work."[114] Leonardo also believed that man could improve the use of his judgment and recommended certain games for painters, whereby they could improve their ability to judge proportions.[115]

Leonardo's most well-known discussion of misjudgment is his treatment of painterly self-love, in which he argues that the tendency for artists to paint figures resembling themselves can be attributed to man's love for his own body. These remarks have been related to the common Florentine saying, "*ogni dipintore dipinge se*": "every painter paints himself." Unlike most writers, however, Leonardo attempts to rationalize the process by which this occurs: writing that "resemblance often pleases us," he argues that "if you should be ugly you would select faces that are not beautiful . . . for often a master's shapes resemble himself."[116] Leonardo explains this phenomenon by noting that judgment "is one of the powers of the soul, by which it shapes . . . the form of the body wherein it resides, thus . . . [when painting] a human body, [judgment] naturally reproduces the one which it first invented."[117] The soul's judgment, therefore, judges favorably that which it has created and has the tendency to create images in its own likeness. The Thomist-Aristotelian and Avicennian qualities of this Leonardian doctrine, which will not be disputed here, have been discussed elsewhere.[118]

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114 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 321, no. 530. "debi tenere uno spechio piano e spesso riguardavri dentro l'opera tua la quale vi fia veduta per lo contrario, e parratti di mano d'altro maestro e lì giudicherai meglio l'errori che altrimenti." Transcription revised as per Pedretti's *Commentary*.

115 See Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 69.

116 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 342–343, no. 587. "spesso pare che simili conformità ci piacino, e se tu fussi brutto eleggieresti volti non belli e faresti brutti volti come molti pittori, che spesso lo figure somigliano il maestro, sichè piglia le bellezze come dico, e quelle metti a mente." See Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence*, 102–104.

117 Leonardo, *Libro A*, no. 11. "chè il giudizio nostro è quello che move le mano alle creazione de'lineamente d'esse figure per diversi aspetti, in sino a tanto ch'esso si satisfaccia. E perchè esso si satisfaccia. E perchè esso giudizio è una delle potenze dell'anima nostra, con la quale essa compose la forma del corpo dov'essa abita, secondo il suo volere, onde, avendo cole mani a rifare un corpo unmano, volentieri rifà quel corpo di che essa fu prima inventrice. e di qui nasce che chi s'innomora volontieri s'innamorano di cose a loro simiglianti."

118 On the Hippocratic understanding of the soul, which comes from Avicenna, see Kemp, "Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se," 314–315. Observing that Leonardo distrusts the variability of the soul's judgment stemming from the variability of the soul, Kemp has rejected the possibility that Leonardo adheres to the Neoplatonic beliefs observed above in Alberti, in which judgment is a gift of all men. Agreeing with Kemp that Leonardo finds variability in the soul, I wish, however, to move away from the either Aristotelian or Neoplatonic debate that has consumed so much research on Renaissance art theory, and discuss how

In addition to these Avicennian qualities, the question of self-love is also at the heart of the "*ogni dipintore dipinge se*" issue. Painters reproduce bodies similar to theirs because "he who falls in love, naturally loves things similar to himself";[119] and if the soul "finds somebody who resembles the body that it has composed, it likes that person and often falls in love."[120] Regardless of whether or not this reflects a Neoplatonic or Aristotelian philosophy of the soul, the notion of self-love is a central concept in Christian spirituality. The concept occurs at least twice in Scripture. The author of the apocryphal book of Sirach writes that "every creature loves its like" (13:15), and love for one's own body appears in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:28–29), in which the apostle instructs husbands to love their wives "as they do their own bodies . . . for no one ever hates his own body." Interestingly, Leonardo twice relates the concept of painterly self-love to the selection of sexual or marital partners: "many fall in love and marry women who look like themselves";[121] and since we are attracted to similarity "there does not exist a woman so ugly that she does not find a lover,"[122] demonstrating perhaps the lingering influence of the Pauline text. If not directly from the Bible, Leonardo may have been introduced to the universality of self-love, once again, through the *Fior di virtù*. Here, the concept is attributed to Thomas Aquinas, though Gozzadini briefly cites Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* as well.[123] Gozzadini writes that "natural love, which is not under our control, induces the soul of each person naturally to love that which is similar to itself."[124] Leonardo could likewise have come across the same concept in *De civitate Dei*, but as the above citations make clear, it is probable that

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Leonardo's precepts on judgment involve the issue of proper love, therefore implicating Christian principles.

119 Leonardo, *Libro A*, no. 11. "E di qui nasce che chi s'innamora volentieri s'innamorano di cose a loro simiglianti."

120 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 86. "e s'ella trova alcuno che simigli al suo corpo ch'ell ha composto ella l'ama, e s'innamora spesso di quello." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, 44v.

121 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 86. "e per questo molti se innamorano e coglian moglie che simiglia a lui." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, 44v.

122 Leonardo, *Libro A*, no. 45. "e volontieri si diletta nelle opere simili a quella ch'ella operò nel comporre del suo corpo: e di qui nasce che non è sì brutta figura di femmina che non trovi qualche amante, se già non fussi mostruosa."

123 Gozzadini, *Fior di virtù*, 3r. "Sancto Augustino nel suo libro dela doctrina chriana e della vera e sacra theologia che debe essere ordine nel amare . . ."

124 Ibid., 6v–7r. "Lo quinto sie amor naturale loqual non e in podesta dele persone: & questo induce & inchina lanimo di ciascuno ad amare naturalmente el suo similie."

self-love was a concept so widely dispersed that Leonardo was familiar with it through a myriad of sources, both literary and oral.[125]

To understand how Christian spirituality is at stake in the question of self-love, it is worth looking at Augustine directly, since this is a central concept in his philosophy, appearing particularly in his *De doctrina Christiana*. Following St. Paul, Augustine writes that self-love is natural: "there is . . . no need to be instructed to love oneself and one's body; we love what we are and what is inferior to us but belongs to us, according to an immovable unvarying natural law."[126] One could, however, love one's body improperly by enjoying the body instead of loving it as an instrument within God's order, created to help the rational soul move toward God: "neither should a person enjoy himself [i.e.: take physical pleasure in himself] . . . because he should not love himself on his own account, but only on account of the one who is to be enjoyed."[127] Hence, though man loves himself, he can exercise this love for his sensible soul or his rational soul. When one loves the body for its own sake, one loves in a private, individual way; when one loves the body for the sake of God, men and women all love in the same way. As Leonardo discusses self-love, therefore, he is recalling again the issue of proper and improper painterly love: painters who paint figures that resemble themselves are allowing their judgment to be guided by the love of their body which is improper, in the Christian context, since one ought to love one's body only on account of God. To love otherwise was to give too much attention to the physical nature of the body itself. Leonardo's precepts to painters therefore harmonize with Christian attitudes in which love for the body clouds judgment.

It is telling that another famous proponent of the "every painter paints himself" theory, the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, weds the concept of unintentional self-portraiture closely to self-love; discussing his sermons briefly here will highlight the spiritual resonances of Leonardo's words. In a famous quote from one of Savonarola's sermons, the maxim "every painter paints himself" is repeated seemingly simply to make the familiar point that

125 Though not specifically on self-love, see Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 14.13.

126 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.24.25–27. "Ergo, quoniam praecepto non opus est ut se quisque et corpus suum diligat, id est, quoniam id quod sumus, et id quod infra nos est, ad nos tamen pertinet, inconcussa naturae lege diligimus, quae in bestias etiam promulgata est (nam et bestiae se atque corpora sua diligunt)." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0029).

127 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.22.21. "Sed nec seipso quisquam frui debet, si liquido advertas; quia nec seipsum debet propter seipsum diligere, sed propter illum quo fruendum est. Tunc est quippe optimus homo, cum tota vita sua pergit in incommutabilem vita, et toto affecto inhaeret illi." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0026).

painters work from internal mental concepts: even though painters depict "lions, horses, men and women," they paint themselves inasmuch as all figures are made "according to [the painter's] concept."[128] However, Savonarola uses the example of the painter to make the point that our actions sometimes unwittingly betray our ulterior motives. For example, when philosophers discuss the nature of God with complicated words and concepts, they are making evident their own self-love, since pride drives them to make a spectacle of their learning rather than to love God with their reason. "Their intellect went to God," he preaches, but in such a way that it served "their love of self."[129] It is rather better to love God than to love one's self out of a desire for self-aggrandizement. For Savonarola as for Leonardo, self-love was a natural inclination of the soul, though it was equally to be avoided since the self ought only to be loved for God's sake. Leonardo and also Savonarola associated self-love with clouded judgment; Leonardo believed that painters were unable to judge a truly beautiful figure due to self-love, and likewise Savonarola preaches that "lovers of one's self" "almost never lift themselves to intellectual speculation [since] they have their intellect and will fixed on sensual pleasures."[130]

These principles, woven into the spiritual and theoretical literature of the time, are flexible and do not constitute a coherent philosophy. For this reason, we should not be bothered if these precepts seem to both harmonize with and contradict Christian principles. For instance, according to Leonardo, enemies might make good judges of a painter's work since judgment "is good in judging the works of enemies, but not those of friends . . . therefore, painter, be disposed to hear none the less willingly what your enemies say of your work."[131]

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128 "Vuoi tu vedere che questa de filosofi fu vana cognitione? Dicono li theologi che li magi di pharao ne defecerunt in tertio signo. Dice la chiosa idest nella bonta di dio. Vuolo tu vedere? E si dice che ogni dipintore dipinge se medesimo. Non dipinge gia se in quanto huomo: perche fa delle imagini di leoni cavalli huomini & donne che non sono se: ma dipinge se in quanto dipintore idest secondo il suo conceto. Et benche siano diverse fantasie, & figure de dipintore che dipingono: tamen sono tutte secondo il conceto suo." Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche di Fra Girolamo da Ferrara Sopra Ezechiel* (Venice, 1541), 157r.

129 "Lo intelletto loro andava la a Dio: ma lo affetto si rivoltava allo amore proprio." Ibid., 157v.

130 "non si elevano mai quasi alcuna speculatione d'intelletto, solo hanno fisso l'intelletto loro & la volonta loro ne piacer sensuali;" later on the same page, Savonarola calls these sinners "amatore di se medesimo." Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche di Fra Girolamo Savonarola de' predicatori* (Florence: Alcide Parenti, Editore, 1846), 219.

131 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 84. "et è bono nel giudicare le cose de'nimici e delli amici no, perché odio e amicizia sono doi de' più potenti accidenti che sieno apresso alli animali. E per questo tu, o pittore, sii vago di non sentire men volentieri quello che li tuoi adversari dicono delle tue opere, che del sentire quello che dicono gli amici." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 65a.

However, from Augustinian sermons he might also have read that "anger, which fogs our reason . . . does not know the reason of justice."[132] Although being an enemy doesn't necessarily entail anger, these two passages present conflicting views on the power of negative sentiments to shape judgment. Likewise, though Leonardo believed that study is best done alone, at another time he recommended that "drawing in company is much better than alone" since "you can learn from the drawings of others" and "the praise of others will incite you to further efforts."[133] Given that his principles are founded partly on commonplace wisdom, Leonardo's ideas occasionally contradict themselves, implying that it is the reader's responsibility to decide when adherence to one concept is more important than another.

As indicated above, to correct self-love, Leonardo suggests that artists should rely on the collected judgments of many men to select a body from which an ideal standard of proportions may be extrapolated, writing that "the painter should make his figure according to the rules for a body in nature, which is commonly known to be of correct proportions."[134] Thus, the painter should cling to number (i.e.: to reason) in order to correct self-love.[135] Leonardo's emphasis on collective cooperation harmonizes closely with the Christian ideal that we are all one in the Church of Christ, in which each person fulfills their place in human society in the same way that each part of the body fits together perfectly to create a whole.[136] This theme is amplified, for instance, in a sermon of Giordano da Pisa, in which he states "man could not live alone" since "I have one defect and you have another, you correct mine and I correct

132 "Fuggiamo frati miei lira che affoga laragione in noi: & non si conosce ragione di giustitia: Rompe lamista. Toglie la pace della mente." Agustine, *Sermones*, "Sermone dellira & dellodio."

133 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 307, no. 495. "Dico e confermo che 'l disegniare in compagnia è motlo meglio che solo, per molte ragioni." "tu piglierai de' tratti di chi fa meglio di te, e se sarai meglio degli altri farai profito di schifare i mancamenti, e l'altrui laude accrescerannno la tua virtù."

134 Leonardo, *Libro A*, no. 45. "Debbe il pittore fare la sua figura sopra la regola d'un corpo naturale, il quale comunemente s[i]a di proporzione laudabile." Kemp, "Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se," 317, writes that "This implies that each individual's idiosyncrasies would tend to be cancelled out."

135 Kemp, "Ogni Dipintore Dipinge Se," 314, suggests that "a Neoplatonist could assert that the proper avoidance of bodily imitation consisted in the artist's recourse to the imitation of inner formulae and to the more invariable potencies of the soul's higher faculties" and notes that Leonardo rejected this as a suitable method for finding beauty. It is argued here that both Alberti's and Leonardo's solution to the problem of faulty judgment is to approach nature with correct love for that nature, that is, a love for God's presence in that nature.

136 St. Paul, Ephesians 5:28–29.

yours."[137] The theme of the utility of all people within the Church accords with the related Christian principle that all parts of nature are necessary and unify with one another. Leonardo is well known for subscribing to this belief, having written that man "will never find an invention more beautiful or more simple or direct than nature, because in her inventions nothing is lacking and nothing superfluous."[138] Carlo Pedretti has already demonstrated the Augustinian dimensions of this theme in *De civitate Dei*. Within Christian spirituality, this theme also expressed man's need to work together as one body in service to Christ.

One great dissonance that permeated human society, however, was the multiplicity of languages. The supreme failing of a liberal artist, in Leonardo's opinion, was that he conveyed his understanding using a man-made language of arbitrary signs. The triumph of painting, on the other hand, was that it eschewed such arbitrary signs and conveyed its understanding across the very objects that God Himself had made. In the following section, Leonardo's beliefs about the superiority of the painter's communication will be examined.

In One Instant Alone

Leonardo writes, recalling the metaphor "the world is a book," that painting "compels the mind of the painter to transform itself into the very mind of nature, to become an interpreter between nature and art."[139] In addition to reading the book of the world, therefore, the painter must also interpret and write a commentary on nature. Paintings are superior to spoken or written language, Leonardo argues, writing that the better science "represents the works of nature [rather] than that which represents . . . the works of man," which are

137 Translation from Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, 128. "Non potrebbe l'uomo vivere solo perocchè non basta a sè stesso, abbisogna dell'aiuto degli altri." "e questo è per gli molti difetti che avemo; chè s'i'ho uno difetto e tu n'hai un altro, to sovvieni al mio difetto e io al tuo." Ibid., 264n130; cited from Giordano da Pisa, *Prediche inedite del B. Giordano da Rivalto dell'Ordine de' Predicatori, recitate in Firenze dal 1302 al 1305*, ed. Enrico Narducci (Bologna, 1867), 85.

138 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 2:250, no. 1205a. "mai esso troverà invention nè più bella nè più facile nè più brieve della natura, perchè nelle sue invenzioni nulla mancha e nulla è superfluo."

139 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 55. "necessità costringe la mente del pittore a trasmutarsi nella propria mente di natura e sia interprete infra essa natura e l'arte." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 40.

his words.[140] To paint, therefore, is to represent the works of nature while also providing an interpretation of it; looking at painting is like reading a commentary on nature that conveys itself across the very objects of its study.

Leonardo sees the deficiencies of written and spoken language reflected in the poet's creative process. The poet, for instance, will visualize stories mentally in the same way that a painter will visualize a pictorial composition; however, the poet's imagination "does not go beyond the common sense, except to refer to memory, and there it stops and dies, if the thing imagined is not of much value."[141] The poet's words will allude to these imaginings, but the mental images upon which poems are based remain unseen. People reading or listening to poems may generate their own imaginings "while their eye is in darkness," but there is a great difference "between imagining a light . . . and seeing it in actuality without that darkness."[142] Likewise, the inadequacy of language is a theme that pervades much Christian spiritual literature, a theme that has already been touched upon regarding the impossibility of describing spiritual experiences. Beyond simply proclaiming that spiritual experiences defied verbal description, Augustine discusses the limitations of language in several books, and in this section I will explore some of the similarities between Leonardo and the church father on this point. The similarities begin with Leonardo's reflections on the differences between internal mental activity and the words used to describe these contemplations, about which Augustine writes, in *De civitate Dei*, that "the sound by which we hear a thought which was first formulated in the silence of the mind, is not itself a thought."[143]

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140 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 17. "Ma diremmo essere più mirabile quella scienzia che rapresenta l'opere de natura, che quella che rapresenta l'opere de l'operatore, cioè l'opere degli omini, che sono le parole, com'è la poesia e simili, che passano per la umana lingua." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 7.

141 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 23. "Non vede l'immaginazione cotal eccellenzia qual vede l'occhio . . . Ma la immaginazione non esce fuori d'esso senso comune, se non in quanto essa va alla memoria, e lì si ferma e lì muore, se la cosa immaginata non è de molta eccellenzia . . . che l'ombra di tal corpo almeno entra per l'occhio al senso comune, ma la immaginazione di tale corpo non entra in esso senso, ma lì nasce, in l'occhio tenebroso." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 15. Farago, in Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 300, notes the relationship to Augustine.

142 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 23. "ma lì nasce, in l'occhio tenebroso. O che differenzia è a imaginar tal luce in l'occhio tenebroso al vederla in atto fuori delle tenebre!" Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 15.

143 Augustine, *City of God*, 10.13. "Sicut enim sonus quo auditur sententia in silentio intelligentiae constituta, non est hoc quod ipsa." Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Migne, *PL* 041.0292).

Leonardo argues that the ineffectiveness of language is in part due to the multiplicity of languages. Paintings, on the other hand, have "no need of interpreters for different languages as does literature."[144] Likewise, painters are not limited to the words of their language, because "the painter will create an infinite number of things which words cannot even name, since there are no words appropriate to them."[145] The painter does not need an arbitrary naming convention in order to speak about a certain thing, because a painting depicts the very form of the body about which it is speaking.

The crippling effect of the variety of languages was a prominent theme in Christian literature, appearing in the Old Testament story of the tower of Babel. A story that naturally would have been familiar to Leonardo, it is summarized in the *Chronica* by Isidore of Seville that he had in his library. Isidore writes that "the division of languages miraculously by God was made to repress the madness of those who built the tower," changing also the "effigies of the faces [of their languages] variously," (i.e.: changing the written signs of languages) so that "neither in speaking nor in face" could speakers of one language understand another.[146] In the New Testament, this deficiency is healed through faith in Christ, as demonstrated in the Acts of the Apostles, who, when touched by tongues of fire, are given the gift of speaking different languages: "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages" (Acts, 2:4). Overcoming the differences of languages through Christ is emblematic of the concord that humanity finds in Christianity: just as every part of the body is unified to serve the soul, likewise in Christ we become one in the body of the Church, prevailing over the conditions that divide us. It is therefore not surprising that the problem of multiple languages appears in Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (explored in chapters very near to the one cited in Leonardo's manuscripts by Melzi, and again in book 19), where he notes that "if two men, each ignorant of the other's language meet . . . it is easier for dumb animals, even of different kinds, to associate together than these men . . . for when men cannot

144 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 17. "Andonque, questa non ha bisogno de interpreti de diverse lingue, come hanno le lettere." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 7.

145 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 24. "perché inifinite cose farà il pittore, che le parole non le potrà nominare, per non aver vocaboli apropriati a quelle." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 15.

146 Isidore of Seville, *La 'Cronaca Volgare' Isidoriana*, 128–129. "Ne la cui hedificatione fo facta la divisione de le lengue miraculosamente da Dio, ad repremere la pazia de quilli che edificavano la torre predicta." "e la effigie de li loro volti variamente mutao in tanto che [né] all o parlare né [in] faccia l'uno l'altro cognosceva."

communicate . . . they are completely unable to associate."[147] He contemplates the theme further in the *Confessions*, writing that he has "heard the sounds of the words by which . . . [things] are expressed . . . [but] the sounds are of one kind in Greek, quite different in Latin, but the things themselves are neither Greek nor Latin."[148] In an interesting passage of Giacomo Campora's *Trattato dell'immortalità dell'anima*, the unnatural and man-made quality of language is evoked when the author notes that—unlike the passions of the soul, which are easily understood and visible in tears and laughter—all humans do not share the same language, which is rather learned through art.[149] If this book were the text identified by this title in Leonardo's library, it would provide a good example of the intellectual context from which Leonardo's thoughts on the deficiencies of language emerge, powerfully contrasting the visual signs of passion with the written or spoken word.

Leonardo argues also that painting is superior to language since it communicates without time, in one instant alone. This view is based on the belief that visual perception occurs instantaneously in an immeasurable moment of time, ultimately an Aristotelian belief found also in the writings of Dante, which Leonardo knew well.[150] Because of the instantaneity of sight, Leonardo writes that one sees "the mass of the sun with the same rapidity as (an object) at the distance of a *braccio* (an arm's length)."[151] This belief became a

147 Augustine, *City of God*, 19.7. "Nam si duo sibimet invicem fiant obviam, neque praeterire, sed simul esse aliqua necessitate cogantur, quorum neuter norit linguam alterius; facilius sibi animalia muta, etiam diversi generis, quam illi, cum sint homines ambo, sociantur. Quando enim quae sentiunt, inter se communicare non possunt, propter solam linguae diversitatem, nihil prodest ad consociandos homines tanta similitudo naturae: ita ut libentius homo sit cum cane suo, quam cum homine alieno." Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Migne, *PL* 041.0634). Also see ibid., 16.4.

148 Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.12.19. "Audivi sonos verborum quibus significantur cum di his disseritur; sed illi alii, istae autem aliea sunt: nam illi aliter graece, aliter latine sonant; istae vero nec graecae nec latinae sunt, nec aliud eloquiorum genus." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, *PL* 032.0787).

149 Giacomo Campora, *Dell'immortalità dell'anima*, "Della quantita de lanima, cap. vi." "Et sapi che se el parlar fosse naturale come o dito cosi come tuti li homini hanno una simel propria passione come el rider in segno de alegreza el pianzer in segno di tristeza cosi arebono uno modo de parlar & sarebe una loquella in tuti li homini del mondo. Ma el parlar e una arte che si impara per longo uso." On Leonardo as a possible reader of this book, see Dionisotti, "Leonardo uomo di lettere," 186–188.

150 On instantaneous vision in Dante, see Gervase Rosser, "Time and the image in the 'Divina Commedia,' " *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 48 (2005).

151 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 139–140, no. 68. "e noi vediamo con quella medessima presetezza il corpo del sole che noi vediamo una distantia d'uno braccio." On Leonardo's

significant aspect of Leonardo's optical investigations, and it likewise made paintings superior to books, since they communicate in one instant of time, whereas the "pen will be worn out before [it] can fully describe what the painter can demonstrate immediately."[152] The instantaneity of images made them a powerful means by which to communicate the beauty of proportion in the visible word by implementing the techniques of linear perspective.[153]

The problems wrought by time are likewise prominent in Christian spirituality, stemming from the concept that permanence is greater than the cycle of growth and decay to which all natural life is subject; the absolute stability of God was the antithesis to worldly change. On this theme in *De civitate Dei*, Augustine writes that God's "thought does not change as it passes from one thing to another, but beholds all things with absolute immutability"; similar passages of Augustine's writings have been considered by Claire Farago as a possible context to understand Leonardo's views on the instantaneity of sight, a comparison explored further in this section.[154] Words, however, were not instantaneous, but dependent on time, a theme Augustine develops in several books. For instance, in his *Confessions*, he considers that the words of men, once spoken, were transferred into the sensible world. Augustine thus wonders what God's "words" were like on those occasions he spoke to men, asking God rhetorically, "but how did You speak? . . . Was it perhaps as when that voice sounded from the cloud . . . ? That voice sounded and ceased to sound, had a beginning and an end."[155] Augustine rejects the idea that the Word of God could possibly be like the words that humans use, even if at times the Holy Spirit has spoken to men in this language, because the words of men

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theory of vision, see Kemp, "Leonardo and the Visual Pyramid," in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977), and James S. Ackerman, "Leonardo's Eye," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978).

152 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 53, no. 18. "perche la tua penna fia consumata inanzi che tu descriva a' pieno quel, che immediate il pitore ti rapresenta con la sua scientia."

153 See discussion by Farago in Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 367, on the relationship between Luca Pacioli's discussion of perspective and proportion and Leonardo.

154 Augustine, *City of God*, 11.21. "Ille quippe non ex hoc in illud cogitatione mutata, sed omnino incommutabiliter videt." Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Migne, *PL* 041.0334). See discussion by Farago in Leonardo, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 327; also see ibid., 332 on Hugh of St. Victor and the superiority of images over words.

155 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.6.8. "Sed quomodo dixisti? Numquid ill modo quo facta est vox de nube, dicens: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus?* Illa enim vox acta atque transacta est, coepta et finita. Sonuerunt syllabae atque transierunt, secunda post primam, tertia post secundam, atque inde ex ordine, donec ultima post caeteras, silentiumque post ultimam." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, *PL* 032.0812).

"pass away and are no more: but the Word of God is above me and endures for ever."[156] In *De civitate Dei*, he writes that God sometimes spoke to man in words of human speech

> syllable by syllable, giving to each its brief moment of fleeting time, although in his own being he uses language that is not physical but spiritual, not addressed to the sense but to the mind, not the language of time but, if I may put it that way, the language of eternity, which he never starts to speak, nor ever ceases to speak.[157]

Therefore for both Leonardo and Augustine, the main deficiency of language was its dependence on time, and its use of arbitrary naming conventions that varied from one community to another.

Leonardo further argues that painting's ability to surpass the limitations of time made it superior also to music, focusing again on the falling away of sound in time. Leonardo writes that even though musical harmonies are beautiful and perceived in one instant (in the case of a harmonic chord, at least), they, too, die away once they have been sounded: "its beauty must change, exchanging one concept for another . . . [it must] be born and die in those rhythms; but painting makes this beauty permanent for many years."[158] In his *Confessions*, Augustine likewise writes about the recital of a psalm in similar terms: the recited portions are "[plucked] off and drop[ped] away into the past," becoming

156 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.6.8. "At illa comparavit haec verba temporaliter sonantia, cum aeterno in silentia Verbo tuo, et dixit: Aliud est, longe aliud est. Haec longe infra me sunt; nec sunt, quia fugiunt et praetereunt: Verbum autem Domini mei supra me manet in aeternum." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, *PL* 032.0812).

157 Augustine, *City of God*, 10.15. "Sic itaque divinae providentiae placuit ordinare temporum cursum, ut quemadmodum dixi, et in Actibus Apostolorum legitur, lex in edictis Angelorum daretur de unius veri Dei cultu, in quibus et persona ipsius Dei, non quidem per suam substantiam, quae semper corruptibilibus oculis invisibilis permanet, sed certis indiciis per subjectam Creatori creaturam visibiliter appareret, et syllabatim per transitorias temporum morulas humanae linguae vocibus loqueretur, qui in sua natura non corporaliter sed spiritaliter, non sensibiliter sed intellegibiliter, non temporaliter sed, ut ita dicam, aeternaliter nec incipit loqui nec desinit." Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Migne, *PL* 041.0293).

158 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 43. "Ma il pittore risponde e dice che 'l corpo composto delle umane membra non dà di sé piacere a' tempi armonici, nelli quali essa bellezza abbia a variarsi dando figurazione ad un altro, né che in essi tempi abbia a nascere e morire, ma la fa permanente per moltissimi anni." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 30.

"matter for [his] memory."[159] Similarly, both Leonardo and Augustine desire to fix all sounds together so that the beauty conveyed by sound may be enjoyed all at the same time, or, rather, in the absence of time. Leonardo notes that the products of poets, in addition to having been formed in the darkness of their mental eye (and then being imagined in the mental darkness of listeners and readers) unfold their beauty in time, and are hence inferior to paintings, which communicate instantaneously. He makes this argument by comparing poetry to a musical chord in which notes are played separately, thus not creating any harmony.

> But poetry produces no comparable grace . . . it is as though in music one were made to hear each voice separately at a different time, and from this no accord could be composed, or if we wished to show a face part by part, continually covering up the parts already shown. . . . The same thing happens to the beauties of anything represented by the poet, from which the memory receives no harmony, since each part is spoken separately at different times.[160]

Augustine spoke about poetry in similar terms, noting that poetry was beautiful, though likewise dependent on time. In *De vera religione*, albeit a book Leonardo likely had not read, there is a striking similarity when Augustine imagines speaking the words of poets simultaneously.

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159 Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.28.38. "Dicturus sum canticum quod novi: antequam incipiam, in totum expectatio mea tenditur; cum autem coepero, quandtum ex illa in praeteritum decerpsero, tenditur in memoria mea: atque distenditur vita hujus actionis meae in memoriam, propter quod dixi; et in exspectationem, propter quod dicturus sum: praesens tamen adest attentio mea, per quam trajiciatur quod erat futurum ut fiat praeteritum." Augustine, *Confessiones* (Migne, *PL* 032.0824).

160 Leonardo, *Treatise on Painting*, no. 40. "Ma della pittura, perché serve all'occhio, senso più nobile che l'orecchio, obbietto della poesia, ne risulta una proporzione armonica; cioè, che sì come di molte varie voci insieme aggionte ad un medesimo tempo, ne risulta una proporzione armonica, la quale contenta tanto il senso dello audito, che li auditori restano con stupente admirazione quasi semivivi . . . Ma della poesia la qual s'abbia a stendere alla figurazione d'una predetta bellezza, con la figurazione particulare di ciascuna parte della quale si compone in pittura la predetta armonia, non ne risulta altra grazia che [se] si facessi a far sentire nella musica ciascuna voce per sé sola in vari tempi, delle quali non si componerebbe alcun concento, come se volessimo mostrare un volto a parte a parte, sempre ricoprendo quelle che prima si mostrano . . . Il simile accade nelle bellezze di qualonque cosa finta dal poeta, le quali per essere le sue parti dette separamente in separati tempi, la memoria non ne riceve alcuna armonia." Leonardo, *Libro di Pittura*, no. 21.

> poetry is beautiful, even though two syllables of it cannot possibly in any way be spoken simultaneously. I mean that the second one cannot be pronounced unless the first one has passed away, and so in due course you reach the end, so that the last syllable is heard, without the previous ones being heard simultaneously, it still completes the form and beauty of the meter by being woven in with the previous ones.[161]

Though Leonardo may or may not have read this particular passage, both he and Augustine wrote about the nature of time in poetry and music in similar terms: as a reflection of their imperfection. Therefore, when Leonardo inserts paintings into this ancient theme, he frames painting in the terms of spiritual discourse and the limitations of language and time.[162]

Painting, communicating itself to the sense of sight, is thus a naturally superior medium. Even though if one glances at a piece of writing, one cannot "in the time, recognize what the letters were, nor what they were meant to tell," Leonardo repeatedly emphasizes that paintings can be looked at quickly.[163] His words imply perhaps that the reading of a painting occurs instantaneously. As a final comparison, I note how this concept of time-less communication harmonizes with Augustine's writings on how knowledge will be communicated instantaneously at the moment of the last judgment. In a passage discussed by Farago with respect to Leonardo's view on time, Augustine writes that, upon union with God, one will not need to move from one thought to the next: "our thoughts will not be revolving, going from one thing to another and returning, but we shall see all our knowledge in a single glance."[164] Likewise in the book of Augustine's sermons, the last judgment occurs "without any

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161 Augustine, *True Religion*, 22.42. "Et hoc totum non propterea malum, quia transit. Sic enim et versus in suo genere pulcher est, quamvis duae syllabae simul dici nullo modo possint. Nec enim secunda enuntiatur, nisi transierit; atque ita per ordinem pervenitur ad finem, ut cum sola ultima sonat, non secum sonantibus superioribus, formam tamen et decus metricum cum praeteritis contexta perficiat." Augustine, *De vera religione* (Migne, *PL* 034.0140).

162 Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence*, 420, relates Leonardo's comparison of music and poetry to Macilio Ficino. On this point it is worth noting that Ficino's observations on music were greatly indebted to Augustine.

163 See page 131 above.

164 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 15.16.26. "Et tunc quidem verbum nostrum non erit falsum, quia neque mentiemur, neque fallemur: fortassis etiam volubiles non erunt nostrae cogitationes ab aliis in alia euntes atque redeuntes, sed omnem scientiam nostram uno simul conspectu videbimus." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.1079). This passage has also been noted in Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's Paragone*, 327.

prolongment of time."[165] In the final book of the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine provides a description of what it will feel like to come to God after the Last Judgment.[166] He describes a kind of seeing-plus-understanding: seeing the bodies of people, yet also being able to see the life that enlivens those bodies, all that is hidden to the eye in terrestrial life, but which, by faith, is believed to exist nonetheless.[167] It is unlikely that Leonardo was thinking of painting in such mystical terms; however, his description of painting as something that succeeds the limits of time suggests that for Leonardo, naturalistic paintings were in some way closer to meaning than the signs of language.

By emphasizing the instantaneity of images, Leonardo de-emphasizes the material nature of painted images; he is not interested in the physical quality of the art object, but only in its force upon the viewer. The virtue of timelessness removes painting, to some to extent, from the bodily, temporal world. By placing Leonardo's thoughts on language and time within the spiritual context of his day, painting acquires a similarity to God's language,

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165 "Frategli mia dilectissimi in giesu christo caramente vivoglio pregare, che in tutte le vostre opere vidobbiate richordare con lamente attenta & divota come tutti noi dobbiamo comparire & stare dinanzi alla sedia del tribunale giudice aldi del giudicio, & ivi ciascun sara rassegnato & examinato: & sara per lacitatione perpentoria sanza di lungatione di tempo, & sanza alcuna excusatione." Augustine, *Sermones*, "Sermone di giudicio."

166 Pedretti, "Il concetto di bellezza," 107, has already argued that the end of *De civitate Dei* may have been of interest to Leonardo, though with respect to a different passage.

167 "It may well be, then . . . that in the world to come, we shall see the bodily forms of the new heaven and the new earth in such a way as to perceive God with total clarity and distinctness, everywhere present and governing all things, both material and spiritual. In this life, we understand the invisible things of God by the things which are made, and we see Him darkly and in part, as in a glass, and by faith rather than by perceiving corporeal appearances with our bodily eyes. In the life to come, however, it may be that we shall see Him by means of the bodies which we shall then wear, and wherever we shall turn our eyes." Augustine, *City of God*, 22.29. "Quamobrem fieri potest, valdeque credibile est, sic nos esse visuros mundana tunc corpora coeli novi et terrae novae, ut Deum ubique praesentem et universa etiam corporalia gubernantem, per copora quae gestabimus, et quae conscpiciemus quaquaversum oculos duxerimus, clarissima perspicuitate videamus: non sicut nunc invisibilia Dei, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur per speculum in aenigmate, et ex parte, ubi plus in nobis valet fides qua credimus, quam rerum coporalium species quam per oculos cernimus corporales. Sed sicut homines, inter quos viventes motusque vitales exserentes vivimus, mox ut aspiciums, non credimus vivere, sed videmus; cum eorum vitam sine corporibus videre nequeamus, quam tamen in eis per corpora remota omni ambiguitate conspicimus, ita quacumque spiritalia illa lumina corporum nostrorum circumferemus, in corporeum Deum omnia regentem etiam per corpora contuebimur." Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Migne, *PL* 041.0800).

conveying an understanding of material objects without the time by which verbal understanding is corrupted. Leonardo's well-known statement that painting supersedes sculpture because it can be practiced without "fatigue and sweat" likewise emphasizes the painter's abstention from matter. Sculptors, on the other hand, "participate in the grossness of matter [rather] than the pureness of imagination."[168] As in Alberti, therefore, Leonardo's painter seeks to succeed or overcome the limitations of material nature.

Having considered some spiritual themes in the writings of Alberti and Leonardo, it is evident that the concepts "art is an imitation of nature" and "art is formed in the mind" were deeply embedded in the discourse of Christian spirituality. When studying nature, painters were meant to inflect their minds piously toward the objects of study, resisting sensual temptations, to perceive God's presence within the material world. As such, the quality of the imitation is intimately linked to the spiritual intention with which the painter imitates a material object. This is perceived in Alberti's writings through the harmonies between his treatise and Christian texts on the liberal arts: in order to perceive God's order in nature, the liberal artist must retreat from the material pleasure to view nature within the light of his internal understanding. Looking at Leonardo's writings through the spiritual literature available to him reveals how painterly study shared similarities with pious contemplation, particularly in that study leads to both understanding and love, making it therefore important to choose the objects of study correctly. For Leonardo, like Alberti, this meant that the painter should not be preoccupied with matter for its own sake, but should rather attend to judgment, the part of man closest to God. The differences between words and images is likewise a recurring theme; particularly in Leonardo, naturalistic paintings use a "language" formally closer to the meanings they convey since they are not formed with an arbitrary sign system and are capable of communicating their meaning in one instant alone.

The spiritual themes in early Renaissance art theory emphasize man's twin sensible and rational nature through which man was both close to God and yet tempted to sin. Much of the guidance given to painters directs the painter to emphasize his rational nature, and hence live by the will of God. The mind of the artist was in the process, therefore, of perfecting his or her closeness to

168 These comments are preserved in Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura* (Milan, 1584), quoted in Pedretti, *Commentary*, 1: 77, who bases his translation on the Haydocke English edition of 1590. "dicendo che quanto più un'arte porta seco fatica di corpo, & sudore, tanto più è vile, & men pregiata. Però che talarte non è manco sogetta alle materie grosse, che alle sottili, cioè alle imaginationi della mente."

God, such that his or her works remain as a relic or trace of this closeness, a theme which shall be expanded in the following chapter.

It is impossible for us to measure to what extent artists might actually have followed the advice of Leonardo and Alberti. Although it would be possible to point to the prevalence of perspectival study as evidence in part of Alberti's influence, it is not possible for us to look at a painting of an object and know to what degree the artist was "meditating" on the object and not becoming too closely attached to the materiality of the object (as per the method described in the discussion of Alberti). This does not mean, however, that contemporaries did not believe that they were able to discern if an artist was so engaged while making a work of art. In the following chapter, for instance, certain passages in the biographies of artists who are championed for seeming to have adhered to such Christian principles while painting will be discussed, lending credence to the belief that these ideals were truly meant to be followed, and that artists who were believed to have done so were celebrated.

CHAPTER 4

Imagining the Souls of Holy People
Part One

Lifting the Veil of the Body

Having discussed how artists formed images in their minds and the spiritual dimensions of this process, the following two chapters address the subject matter of holy art: depictions of holy figures and moments from sacred history. I limit my consideration to the attitudes adopted and problems faced by artists representing sacred themes rather than treating the theological correctness of certain subjects, questions that have been amply discussed by other scholars. As per Alberti's suggestion that "the great work of the painter is . . . a *historia* . . . [the] parts of [which] are the bodies," the following chapters consider the spiritual problems of representing historical subjects, beginning with the bodies depicted in these images.[1] This examination, however, moves beyond Alberti and Leonardo and into the literature of the sixteenth century.

Sixteenth-century literature on art was written and read by a class of people more diverse than that which had access to fifteenth-century literature, primarily due to the advent of the printing press.[2] Consequently, tracing the intellectual sources pertinent to writers and readers is more complicated: sources cannot be neatly confined to a booklist or the literature widely read by a single intellectual group. These texts circulated more broadly and accordingly the following chapters consider a spectrum of sixteenth-century writers with the belief that, though some writers may share little in common, their works were prepared for a general literate public, and hence potentially to be read in comparison with one another. Despite various geographical and scholarly differences, all writers considered here were Christians, and therefore a reading of the spiritual themes in their works gains through comparison.

1 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.35. "Amplissimum pictoris opus non colossus sed historia . . . Historiae partes corpora." "Grandissima opera del pittore non uno collosso, ma istoria . . . Parte della istoria sono i corpi." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.35.

2 On the general literacy in Italy during the Renaissance, see Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 112 and ibid., 112–121 on the ownership of printed books.

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The popular literature of the sixteenth century was replete with spiritual works or books suffused in Christian themes.[3] Accordingly, the literature on art appears to speak in concert with these spiritual texts, or presume knowledge of them; as other scholars have noted, the two genres invite comparison by drawing upon the same literary conventions.[4] Spiritual literature at this time often consisted of newly written books, while also comprising medieval, monastic texts being printed for general consumption by the literate public.[5] In these spiritual books many of the Christian ideas developed in patristic and medieval ecclesiastical literature, discussed in the preceding chapters, were synthesized and simplified for popular audiences. It may be argued that the literature on art appealed to a similar market.[6] Justifiably, one imagines that readers of the literature on art were attuned to the broad religious principles being developed in popular spiritual books and that they were being read alongside one another.

Although this chapter will not focus on the particular historical context of the Counter-Reformation, it is important to note, even if only briefly, that several scholars have presumed it had an impact on sixteenth-century literature on art.[7] The religious conservatism of authors writing toward the end of the sixteenth century has been in part perceived as the influence of the Council of Trent, and certainly many of the quotations that follow, regarding especially the moral purity of the artist, may be interpreted in light of this historical context. I address questions relating directly to the Counter-Reformation in the following chapter and do not deny that it was a catalyst for the production of some books on art. However, as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters, the spiritual themes of Renaissance literature on art do not appear solely during the Counter-Reformation, and in fact many of the religious themes pervading the late sixteenth century are present in earlier writings. This suggests that the spiritual themes cannot be explained simply by

3 See Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers*, chapter 6. On the religious content of early printed books in Italy, see Leonardas Vytautas Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976), chapter 4, particularly 92–106.

4 See Carl Goldstein, "Rhetoric and Art History in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque," *The Art Bulletin* 73 (1991), 646.

5 An example of which is Gozzadini, *Fior di virtù*. See Gerulaitis Vytautas, *Printing and Publishing*, 122–123. On the appearance of popular devotional books, see Grendler, "Form and Function."

6 Frangenberg, *Der Betrachter*, examines literature on art created for people other than artists. On the readers of the literature on art see Hope, "The Audiences for Publications."

7 See, for example, Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450–1600*, particularly chapter 8. The bibliography is discussed in more depth in later chapters.

pointing to the Counter-Reformation, and rather that it is necessary to link these ideas to Christian belief more broadly. As such, here I discuss the writings of authors overtly concerned with the Counter-Reformation alongside the works of others who were not involved with this movement, showing some lines of continuity that exist broadly in the literature of this period.

The present chapter and the following one study how the bodies of holy people were visualized in the minds of painters. My concern, however, is not for anatomical understanding of the human body but rather the soul animating the body: how the artist was to visualize the soul as seen through the body. Alberti wrote that "feelings are known from the movements of the body . . . the painter, therefore, must know all about the movements of the body."[8] Over a century later, Francesco Bocchi wrote that the artist "with subtle thoughts paints the face, such that it almost speaks . . . of the soul, and of thoughts."[9] Alberti describes only passing emotions whereas Bocchi perceives the soul itself; however, both authors instruct the artist to convey some interior, otherwise invisible life within the painted body. The issue of visualizing the souls of holy people will be divided into two broad categories in parts one and two of this chapter: the difficulties inherent in finding this "invisible" quality will be the focus of part one, and part two considers how various writers on art believed that the painted body could reveal the soul of the depicted figure.

In studying this question, I am proposing a relationship between the perceived animation of a painted or sculpted figure and the spiritual efficacy of a work of art. At first glance this proposition appears intuitively plausible: for instance, Vasari's above-mentioned description of Titian's *Penitent Magdalen* attributes the spiritual force of the painting to the verisimilitude of the Magdalene's compunction. In the first chapter of this study, however, the comparatively primitive miracle-working image of the Santissima Annunziata also had the ability to compunct viewers: Francesco Bocchi describes the affective power of both the early Annunziata image and Donatello's technically accomplished *St. George*, implying either that the technical skill of the artist was not of singular importance, or that what was once achieved through miracle was later perfected through craft (Bocchi's own discussion of this tension is addressed at the end of this chapter). This situation raises questions about the role of

8 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.41–42. "Sed hi motus animi ex motibus corporis cognoscuntur . . . Pictori ergo corporis motus notissimi sint oportet." "movimenti d'animo si conoscono dai movimenti del corpo . . . conviene sieno ai pittori notissimi tutti i movimenti del corpo." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.41–42.

9 "con sottile avviso dipigne pure il volto, che quasi favella . . . dell'animo, & del pensiero." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 2.

naturalism in creating the appearance of life-likeness in a figure, to thereby provoke religious experiences. Accordingly, the first part of this chapter examines some current theoretical literature on the perceived agency of images and outlines how this discourse may help to understand the role that naturalism played in shaping religious experiences with art.

The issue of naturalism and the spiritual efficacy of religious art objects intersect with questions that have been developed in contemporary anthropological literature about works of art and their ability to manifest agency. For example, in both the Annunziata fresco and Donatello's *St. George*, Bocchi bears witness to what anthropologist Alfred Gell has called the agency of the work of art: its ability to play the role of a social agent.[10] Gell's theories have been much discussed recently, particularly with regard to miracle working images; my own discussion of Gell and the miraculous in Early Modern art serves as a prelude to a discussion of agency as manifest in Renaissance literature on art.[11] Both the Annunziata fresco and Donatello's *St. George* are inanimate objects that inspire compunction in the viewer, a role previously accomplished (at times) through the persuasion of living social agents: preachers of sermons.[12] In the case of the miracle-working image, this ability was attributed to its miraculous status through which it achieves what Gell calls "psychological intentionality," that is, the intentionality accorded to other living, rational beings. Although it was clear to all that the Annunziata painting was not a living being in the same way that humans are, it was treated as though it could sense what occurred around it and could act according to what it perceived (i.e.: decide to perform or not perform miracles).[13] Though there is no equivalent tradition in which the *St. George* sculpture performs miracles according to what it perceives, it

10 My discussion of Gell's ideas is drawn mostly from Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), particularly chapter 7, "The Distributed Person."

11 See for example Holmes, *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence*, and by the same author, "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence." In the latter article, the author also outlines some of the major points in Gell's theory in relationship to miracle-working images in the Renaissance, though she expresses reservation about the applicability of his ideas, which is noted below when I revist the essential points of this theory. Gell is also considered in Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles*. This chapter was largely completed before the publication of the above mentioned titles, thus it has not been possible to fully integrate the findings of these publications into this chapter.

12 Compunction, as noted earlier, was also stimulated by God through meditation, or through reading Scripture.

13 The issue of images seeing what occurs around them is treated by Gell, *Art and Agency*, 116–120. In chapter 1, Jacapo Passavanti's description of a sculpture of the Madonna and

shares in part of the agency attributed to the Annunziata image since it can persuade viewers as a preacher would (as has long been noted, Bocchi's categories to describe the *St. George* are borrowed from classical rhetoric).[14] In fact, Bocchi, like many other art theorists, posited that works of art had qualities that made them seem alive, which he termed the *vivacità* of the work of art, without which the sculpture of St. George would be simply "a piece of rock, not only deprived of perfection, but resembling a dead and immobile corpse."[15]

A theme explored throughout this chapter thus investigates how contemplations on the naturalism of the human figure in Renaissance art, and its ability to present the soul of the figured person, are constructed with language that recalls the intentionality attributed to miracle-working images and other inanimate objects such as holy relics. This suggests that the rise of naturalism in Renaissance art is not only a history of increasing scientific objectivity in art, and art for art's sake, as has sometimes been supposed, but rather a history of spiritual agency being attributed to objects through technical excellence and the artist's virtuous intentions. The evidence presented in the following chapters cannot make an exhaustive case for this argument, which would presumably require a wider cultural survey; rather, I observe how the literature on art expresses attitudes betraying belief in the intentionality of sacred objects, and how the naturalistically painted body becomes a locus for these imaginings. I will also discuss how sentiments expressed about the naturalistic *vivacità* of a figure can be illuminated through comparison with Gell's theories of art and agency, albeit a theory originally explicated with mostly non-Western examples. The importation of Gell to the Renaissance context is not performed to claim that Gell's theories can function as a universal theory of the arts, but rather to suggest how his own theoretical model sheds light on this particular historical context, without making any further assumptions about its larger applicability. Accordingly, the following subsection of this chapter is an excursus into the anthropological literature of agency, with the ultimate intention of

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Child reacting to the prayers of a penitent Christian has already been discussed. Also see Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 19.

14 On Bocchi's use of rhetorical terms in *San Giorgio*, see Thomas Frangenberg, "The Art of Talking About Sculpture."

15 "Perché, se ella non rendesse viva e non desse quasi l'anima a questa figura, che altra cosa sarebbe, se non un pezzo di sasso, non solamente privo di perfezzione, ma ad un corpo immobile e morto somigliante?" Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 153. On vivacità, see Arjan De Koomen, "Aristotle's 'Poetics' Into Art Criticism. Francesco Bocchi in Praise of Donatello's Saint George," in *Officine del nuovo: Sodalizi fra letterati, artisti ed editori nella cultura italiana fra Riforma e Controriforma*, ed. Harald Hendrix and Paolo Procaccioli (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2008).

bringing this to bear on literary discussions of the soul of a work of art in the Italian Renaissance.

The Soul of a Work of Art: The Agency of Sacred Art

It is especially pertinent to discuss miracle-working art objects in terms of Gell's anthropological theories on the intentionality accorded to objects, and the social roles played by art objects, since, as has been seen, these objects are dressed, honored and cared for by their caretakers as would be a living, honored guest.[16] Accordingly, Gell tackles the question of how communities decide to treat an object as though it were a living person. Though these objects do not live and breathe in the same way that plants and animals do, Gell observes that they are attributed psychological intentionality through which they perceive the world around them, affecting change as other social agents might. Gell's primary objects of study are not Western art objects, though his observations bear usefully on Early Modern art. In the following summary of his ideas, I do not mean to presume the correctness of his anthropological descriptions or his interpretations of various cultural practices outside of the Western context; ultimately I am only concerned with the theory about the intentionality of art objects that he extrapolates from these descriptions, believing that it can be fruitfully applied to Early Modern Italian culture.

My discussion of Gell examines his theories on the perceived agency of cult objects, and his hypotheses on the mechanics of this agency; that is, how objects were implicated in social structures that accorded them agency. Gell's analysis begins with an examination of Alain Babadzan's description of *mauri* (fertility stones, or sometimes other objects such as pieces of wood) in Maori culture.[17] *Mauri* were placed into the forest by priests to guarantee the fertility of the forest, thus producing birds for hunters to kill, some of which were later set aside for the priests.[18] In his description, Gell posits that the stones are aniconic idols (idols that are not meant to bear physical resemblance to the god they represent), believed to contain the spirit of the forest, or the

16 See Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience"; Trexler, "Dressing and Undressing Images"; Trexler, "Being and Non-Being," 21–24; Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 48; Gell, *Art and Agency*, 134.

17 See Gell, *Art and Agency*, 106. See also the original analysis in Alain Babadzan, *Les dépouilles des dieux: Essai sur la religion tahitienne à l'époque de la découverte* (Paris: Éditions de la maison des science de l'homme, 1993), 51–67.

18 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 106.

fertility of the forest (the *hau* of the forest). This analysis is relevant to the present discussion since the stones are attributed with the ability to change the environment around them and respond to the manner in which they are treated. The priests treat the stones in a particular way—reciting incantations over them, burying them in the forest, filling hollow stones with locks of hair or other materials—thus making the priest responsible for giving fertility to the forest, and consequently part of the products of the forest are set aside for them: "because . . . fertility can be represented—i.e. objectified in an index—it comes under control of those who control the index, the priests."[19] The *mauri* are effective representations of the fertility of the forest since they are "conceptually, something produced by that growth; it is the exuviae of the forest, which falls into the hands of the priests."[20] In other words, fertility can be objectified in something that is produced by fertility, which explains why the stones are further filled with other products of growth—cut hair, for example. Thus, *mauri* are intentional agents, capable of perceiving the way they are treated and accordingly capable of creating change—e.g. the growth of the forest—in response to their treatment.

Though there are many factors that distinguish Maori fertility stones from sacred paintings during the Renaissance, there are some meaningful similarities, beginning with the objects over which both were accorded agency. Although it may seem at first merely coincidental, both the Maori fertility stones and the miracle-working image in Early Modern Italy presided over the communities' access to food.[21] I have already noted the spiritual nourishment provided by the Annunziata image, mirrored by the fact that food was distributed in times of famine at the site of the miraculous image at Orsanmichele.[22] Also, communion was taken in conjunction with ritual practices around miracle-working images, further emphasizing the bond between the image and nourishment. More directly, the miracle-working image of Our Lady of Impruneta, kept in the village *pieve* outside Florence, brought into the city in times of need, was often worshiped so that she might provide rain in times of drought, or end rain in times of flood, thus ensuring good harvests.[23] At times,

19 Ibid., 107. Babadzan, *Les dépouilles des dieux*, 57–58, discusses how rituals performed over the stones give them their powers.

20 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 108; see also Babadzan, *Les dépouilles des dieux*, 61.

21 The miracle-working image had influence over other matters as well, such as personal health and military success, but its influence over food provides a useful point of entry for my comparison.

22 See chapter 1.

23 See Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 14.

to increase the power of the image during processions throughout the city, the image was accompanied by the city's most important relics, and it has likewise been noted that in Early Modern Europe relics were able to generate agricultural fertility miraculously.[24] The Impruneta icon was also, like the Annunziata image, controlled by the Signoria and powerful members of Florentine society, such as the Medici, who decided how and when to treat the image (for instance, when to unveil it, or bring it to Florence in procession), suggesting that, like the Maori priests, the action of the miraculous image is its response to both the collective devotion it receives and its complicity with the desires of those who control it. As Richard Trexler notes, the Impruneta icon would receive honors in the form of gifts from citizens and bestow favors only if worshiped properly.[25]

There are also clearly differences between the fertility stones that objectify the regenerative powers of the forest and painted icons that represent holy figures, including the fact that the rituals associated with these objects are very different.[26] A further difference regards the fact that historically, icons of the Madonna arose out of traditions that did not always bear upon agricultural fertility.[27] The difference with which I will be most engaged in this discussion is the material relationship between the icon and that which it represents. Stones and pieces of wood, as mentioned, are products or parts of the forest, and therefore Gell suggests that they objectify fertility by being a part of the whole forest. The belief that the priest's treatment of the stones affects the forest as a whole may, as Gell suggests, presume the same logic that underlies volt sorcery and sympathetic magic in which people are impacted by the way

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24 See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 76, 92; André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 463–465. On the procession of saints' relics to protect from public misfortune, see Nicole Herrmann-Mascard, *Les Reliques des Saints: Formation coutumière d'un droit* (Paris: Éditions Klisckseick, 1975), 221–223; also see G.J.C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist: A Process of Mutual Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 254–255.

25 See Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 21.

26 Babadzan, *Les dépouilles des dieux*, 51–67, discusses in depth the importance of gift-giving in the *mauri* rituals: the priest gives the stones to the forest, the forest gives the birds to the hunters, and then some birds are returned to the priests. Gifts are often given to paintings, but it would require more analysis to determine if there was any similarity between these two rituals.

27 The early history of Christian icons, and their relationships to funerary portraits and imperial images, among other things, is discussed by Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, chapters 5 and 6.

their bodily products (exuviae such as hair and nails) are treated: by treating a part, the entirety can be affected.[28] However, the painted icon of the Madonna is not solely the product of agricultural fertility in the same way; in fact, the bodily relics of saints are more similar to *mauri* in this regard, since they are also products of growth and, moreover, far from being emblems of death, relics carry the saint's special life-giving *virtus*.[29] There are, nonetheless, some ways that painted panels may be perceived to be products of fertility: paintings of the Madonna often refer thematically to nourishment and fertility (as for example in images of her breast feeding the infant Christ, or in images showing her miraculous conception).[30] Furthermore, paintings are made of food and animal products, as is clear in Cennini's *Libro dell'Arte*: besides the egg medium used in tempera painting, the glue used to join two panels is made with cheese, mordant gilding is done with garlic juice; Cennini even seems to suggest that the panel can be hungry, noting that when the panel is primed with animal skin glue, it should be prepared with a lighter coat, just as one prepares for a meal with wine.[31] However, Early Modern Italian panel paintings are far more than merely food items that thematically depict themes regarding nourishment: they are objects that have been crafted according to a very sophisticated tradition for the purpose of being looked at. Any discussion of the way in which the painting manifests the intentions of someone other than

28 See Gell, *Art and Agency*, 99–104. For one of the original presentations of this idea see James George Frazer, *The New Golden Bough: A New Abridgment of the Classic Work*, ed. Theodor H. Gaster, 4th ed. (New York: S.G. Phillips, 1972), part 1.

29 See Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 427. On the saints' triumph over death, see Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 76–78. See Snoek, *Medieval Piety*, 340, for the example of Hildegard of Bingen's hair, which worked miracles even during the saint's lifetime.

30 On images of the Virgin breast-feeding, see Megan Holmes, "Disrobing the Virgin: the Madonna Lactans in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Art," in *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. Geraldine Johnson and Sara F. Matthews Grieco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For a general overview of the relationship between food and religion in Early Modern Christianity, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, chapter 2. On breast-feeding in Renaissance Florence, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300–1530," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

31 Cennini, *Il libro dell'arte*. "Affare una cholla di chalcina e di formaggio," chapter 112; "E un altro mordent . . . Togli agli mondi, in quantita di due otter scodelle o una . . . ," chapter unnumbered in Thompson's edition, page 93; "Essai chessa la prima cholla con acqua? Che viene a essere men forte, e a punto chome fussi digiuno e mangiassi una presa di chonfetto, e beessi un bichiere di vino buono, che e uno invitarti a disinare. Chosi e questa cholla: e un farsi acchostare il legniame appigliare le cholle e giessi," chapter 113.

its maker (i.e.: how it becomes the Holy presence within it) must in some way account for not only its material relationship to the objects over which it has agency, but also its quality as a seen object crafted according to certain artistic principles: thus, the artist and the visible quality of the work are key factors.

I turn now to a more detailed discussion of how the seen object is perceived to have agency, noting some preliminary similarities between the powers attributed to saints' relics and paintings. A primary point of similarity regards the effect of seeing a living saint and the effect of a painted saint: André Vauchez describes how the physical beauty of a saint was often a sign of the *virtus* of their body, which, once seen, had some of the same effects that a relic might have—for instance, affecting immediate conversion;[32] in these cases, then, the living face of a saint was capable of doing what was later attributed to sacred images, and likewise, painted images of saints were often treated like relics.[33] The power of a living saint's appearance may be explained by considering Gell's hypothesis that the sight of a person is conceptually exuviae from that person: literally, the sight of someone is a peeled layer of themselves received and consumed by the viewer, hence carrying the same powers attributed to their physical exuviae.[34] This theory emerges in Epicurean philosophy and is famously expressed by Lucretius, who notes that "what we call idols of things . . . [are] like films stripped from the outermost body of things, [and] fly forward and backward through the air."[35] Commenting on this passage, Gell writes that if appearances are "material parts of things, then the kind of leverage which one obtains over a person or thing . . . [with] their image is comparable . . . to the leverage . . . obtained by having access to some physical part of them."[36] Accordingly, some miraculous images not made by human hand, such as Veronica's veil and the shroud of Turin, might be thought of as exuviae, a peeled-off layer of Christ's image which remains on the touched object, thus containing Christ's *virtus*. Some Early Modern rituals appear to have replicated the process through which such contact relics were made: the cloths and veils that wrapped some images, for instance, once removed from the image, were treated as though they too contained some of the power of that vener-

32 See Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 435.

33 Ibid., 452.

34 See Gell, *Art and Agency*, 104–106.

35 Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, ed. and trans. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 4.30 ff. "attinet, esse ea quae rerum simulacra vocamus;/ quae, quasi membranae summo de corpore rerum/ dereptae, volitant ultroque citroque per auras."

36 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 105.

ated image (or the presence within the image), like peeled-off skin.[37] Thus, the unwrapping of an image might be thought to rehearse the same process the image naturally produced by dispersing its image into the atmosphere, thereby releasing visual layers for viewers. As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Epicurean belief that images left meaningful impressions in the souls of viewers was still very much alive in the Renaissance, even if it is not a central source for Early Modern optics.

Gell's model, therefore, hypothesizes how some objects can exert power even though, speaking in purely material terms, those objects do not have agency the way a living being does. Though Renaissance art objects responded to more than simply the need for agricultural fertility, I believe that Gell's discussion does illuminate the Early Modern context. The problem remains, however, that in the Renaissance, sacred paintings contained images of holy people mediated through the mind of the artist and were not, therefore, images of the holy person him- or herself. Although earlier icons made claims to being authentic portraits of saints and holy figures, in the Renaissance the focus shifted to the artist's ability to imagine and generate images of sacred people.[38] Much of this chapter thus addresses the question of the artist's role, and how it was believed that painters could so mediate between the saint and his or her image. I suggest that, if the painting was in some way a shed product of bodily growth with the ability to bear upon growth and nourishment in the larger material world, it may in part have been so by being a product of the painter's body. Evidence from Renaissance literature on art suggests that this is in part how paintings were conceptualized: a painting was not simply a product created by the painter but rather, like the relics of a saint, it was a shed layer of the artist's skin.[39] As such, it was a product of life and therefore bore upon life, fertility and nourishment as well.

Delving deeper into the question of how an object is perceived to have agency, and treated as a living being despite evidently not being alive, Gell develops two approaches to make sense of this apparent paradox. Looking to philosophers who theorize how humans attribute intentionality to other humans, Gell first considers an "externalist" philosophy, which proposes that

37 On wearing clothes previously worn by statues, see Trexler, "Dressing and Undressing Images," 380–381, and Trexler, "Being and Non-Being," 22–23.

38 On authentic portraits of holy people, see Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, chapter 4. Also see Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, chapter 1.

39 On paintings being like contact relics, see Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), especially chapter 7, "The Divine Hand."

intentionality is attributed to other people by assessing the consistency with which they interact with us.[40] Gell notes that art objects, like people, behave or respond with consistency to the way they are treated, citing, for instance, the ancient Egyptian practice of treating images of Gods as honored guests (by feeding and bestowing gifts on them, their passive acceptance demonstrating their receptivity to this role).[41] This holds true for Early Modern images, which are treated as honored people—as Belting, Trexler and others have remarked—by being dressed, protected, taken in processions, etc., a practice that emerges in Christianity when Christ's image is used alongside the Emperor's.[42] These actions make them passive, bringing them under the control of those who manage and care for them and are thus receptive to their desires.[43] The things that are asked of them—such as agricultural abundance—can either be attributed to the goodwill of the image if it occurs, or to its malevolence if miracles are not manifested.[44]

The second philosophy that Gell considers, regarding the attribution of psychological intentionality, postulates that intentionality is granted to other living agents based on one's presumed ability to make internal representations of one's thoughts, according to what Gell terms the "internalist" philosophy of mind.[45] The internal mental maps and schema of other human minds remain,

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40 See Gell, *Art and Agency*, 126–137. "According to Wittgenstein, and a great many other subsequent philosophers, the possession of a mind is something we attribute to others, provisionally, on the basis of our intuition that their behaviour (e.g. their linguistic behaviour) follows some 'rule' which, in principle, we may reconstruct," 126.

41 Ibid., 133–135. Holmes, "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence," 453, finds Gell's postulation problematic, in that his "theory of 'personhood' also forces miraculous images to assume personhood and to conform to human behaviors when they clearly did not. These were, after all, supernatural embodiments." In Gell's defence, however, it could be argued that it is only the index's behavior as a patient (i.e.: as that which has something done to it) that must demonstrate consistent external, passive acceptance. As an agent, on the other hand, when affecting "miraculous" occurances, the index is not restricted to the range of human behaviors.

42 Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 48 and chapter 6; Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience." On dressing and veiling images, see Victor M. Schmidt, "Curtains, *Revelatio*, and Pictorial Reality in Late Medieval Renaissance Italy," in *Weaving, Veiling, and Dressing: Textiles and their Metaphors in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Kathryn M. Rudy and Barbara Baert (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), particulary 199, on the unwrapping of a painting in Padua during a liturgical play.

43 Trexler, "Dressing and Undressing Images," 395.

44 The failure of miracle-working images is considered by Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience," 21–27.

45 See Gell, *Art and Agency*, 137–140.

however, unknown to everyone but he or she to whom they belong; they are presumed to exist internally though the soul cannot be seen simply by "opening up" the person in question. In fact, the difference between the inside and outside of a person is ambiguous: peeling away layers of the physical body does not bring us closer to the soul or to the thoughts that are believed to reside internally.[46] Thus, Gell asserts that the relationship between the soul and the body has the characteristic of a fractal in which each divided part has the same characteristics as the whole.[47] That is, our physical bodies are like fractals in that, even though each part is materially different, the soul is believed to be equally present in every part of the body. This view is consistent with Early Modern belief, having been asserted, for instance, by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa theologiae*.[48]

Gell proposes, consequently, that intentional objects have this fractal-like composition: their intentionality resides somehow within them, though it cannot be isolated to one particular part.[49] Providing examples from both Western and non-Western cultures, Gell illustrates how certain intentional objects are made from a conglomerate of identical smaller forms, as if to illustrate the implied belief that the entire form is present even in the smallest part. Similar beliefs animate relics in Christian culture: for instance, medieval Christian belief maintained that each bit of the relic equally contained the saint's *virtus*;[50] likewise, Aquinas proposed that each part of the Eucharist contained Christ's body completely.[51] Congruent beliefs emerged in the Renaissance regarding artistic products, at which time even the disposable by-products of artistic activity—such as drawings—came to be valued as traces of the artist's genius.[52]

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46 Ibid., 139–140. Gell discusses Ibsen's story of Peer Gynt's onion, in which the layers of an onion's skin are meant to represent layers of biographical experience, which can be peeled away without ever getting to the heart of the onion.

47 Ibid., 140.

48 See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, p. 1, q. 76, a. 8, "whether the soul is in each part of the body."

49 Holmes, "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence," 452, also takes issue with this aspect of Gell's theory, citing the fact that it depends on an "ahistorical mind/body binary, which fails to differentiate the complex operations of the mind and soul." Though the Early Modern theory of the mind and body was obviously more complex than can be treated here, the above citation of Aquinas suggests that there were at least some structural similarities to Gell's formulation.

50 See Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," 94.

51 See Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 51.

52 See Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, especially chapter 7, "The Divine Hand." Also see Stowell, "Artistic Devotion."

The most famous example is the story of Giotto's "O," which showed his mastery in a simple geometrical form.[53] This story demonstrates that a similar fractal-like quality may be perceived in the work of art since each material trace of the artist is an index to something that might be called the artist's "ingegno." Giotto's "O" is comparable to the *virtus* of a relic since each contains a power associated with the soul of the person present in the material traces of their body. In a telling example, Francesco Bocchi meditates on Donatello's *St. George*, marveling that each part of the body expresses the *vivacità* of the figure, thus giving the sculpture the appearance of such unity that even if "one part from the others was divided . . . it would nonetheless appear to be from a valorous, noble-minded warrior."[54] Thus the presence of the work of art, its uncanny lifelikeness, saturates the work of art in every part, just as the presence of the artist manifests itself even in the smallest sketch and just as the *virtus* of the saint is complete in every particle of his or her relics. The homogenous, or fractal-like, quality of images is noteworthy since it points, I believe, to the ambiguity that clouds our perceptions of psychological intentionality: like the relic, whose power is evenly distributed throughout itself, or the painting which is stamped with the presence of the painter equally throughout itself, our soul is incomprehensibly everywhere and nowhere within us.

Gell also relates the "internalist" philosophy of psychological intentionality to art objects by suggesting that objects to which agency has been attributed figure their own interiority: therefore, just as the soul has a mysteriously unknowable interior, this quality can also be schematically represented in art objects.[55] For example, these objects are often concealed, or made hollow to hold something else: the Maori stones have pieces of hair in them; paintings or sculptures often contain reliquaries; paintings are concealed with veils, or dressed in clothes; paintings have several wings that can be opened and shut. All of these objects figure interiority: just as all living things are constantly growing and shedding parts of themselves, the rituals of veiling and unveiling objects, and of encasing or exposing objects replicate the mysteriously unknowable

53 Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 123. On Giotto's "O", see Paul Barolsky, *Why Mona Lisa Smiles and Other Tales by Vasari* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 10–12.

54 "Perché senza fallo, chi molto considera, conosche che le braccia e la testa e le mani e le gambe et i piedi et il petto sono così ben e così nobilmente uniti e tanto magnificamente al volto rispondenti, che, comecché una parte dall'altra divisa fosse e spezzata, ella nondimeno di uomo valoroso e guerriero e magnanimo apparirebbe." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 145. On the unity of the sculpture, see Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 175.

55 See Gell, *Art and Agency*, 132–133.

interior of the living object.[56] I argue in this chapter that these strategies for animating art objects, though they still survived in the Renaissance, began to be subsumed by naturalistic representation; thus the painter was charged with creating an image that figured its interiority and seemed to shed pieces of itself through naturalistic painting technique. By this I do not mean that naturalism replaced the strategy of literally veiling and concealing the object, but rather that the naturalistic painting technique began to embody these processes. Specifically in the following section I demonstrate how the naturalistically painted body became, like the saint's relic, mysteriously something that contained its sum virtue in every part of its being, and also something that had mysteriously an inside and outside, and finally, how this made it the exuviae of a particularly powerful artistic/spiritual activity.

The Sweetness of Honey: Painted Flesh, Veils and Interiority

Having discussed the agency of art and Gell's theories regarding the attribution of psychological intentionality to cult objects, the remainder of this chapter explores how this material is pertinent to the issue of painting holy figures in the Renaissance literature on art. As noted, an important distinguishing feature that is relatively unaccounted for in Gell's theory is the importance of the artist's contribution to the object's perceived agency, and this distinction is addressed here in two distinct ways. Continuing with the theme of the interiority of art objects, this section examines how contemplations of painted bodies by Renaissance writers meditate on the skill with which painted skin and cloth are depicted, and how they serve as a conduit to the interiority of a represented figure; in these descriptive passages, writers often use themes and metaphors imported from spiritual literature to express this point. Specifically, painted bodies become the target for meditations on the spiritual presence of a work of art. The final section of part one of this chapter will explore how the artist was capable of imagining the interiority of holy figures: an anatomical understanding of the body helped the painter form bodies in the imagination though it did not always suffice to figure the emotions of a person, and beliefs regarding the artist's ability to imagine the soul of a holy person will conclude this discussion.

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, the painted figure could reveal the interior feelings of a depicted person: although the soul was invisible it was made known through the skin. The mysterious relationship between exterior

56 Ibid.

and interior is a theme that can be perceived in the often repeated story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, a painting described by Quintilian and later recalled by Alberti, who wrote that the artist Timanthes

> had made Calchas sad and Ulysses even sadder . . . and employed all his art and skill on the grief-stricken Menelaus, [such that] he could find no suitable way to represent the expression of [Iphigenia's] disconsolate father; so he covered his head with a cloth, and thus left more for the onlooker to meditate upon his grief than he could see with the eye.[57]

By suggesting that there were certain emotional states impossible for the artist to imagine and figure, the story illustrates the sometimes difficult relationship between visual appearance and invisible presence: certain movements of the soul were best left for the viewer to contemplate interiorly.

In the above passage Alberti evokes, intentionally or unintentionally, an ancient metaphor for the invisibility of the spiritual meanings of the Bible, which were said to be covered by a veil.[58] The veil that obscures sight was a common trope in Christian spirituality: one important point of origin is Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle writes that the veil covering Moses' face from the Israelites represents man's blindness before Christ made perception of God possible (2 Corinthians 3:7–18).[59] Belief in Christ lifted the veil that obscured Moses from the Israelites, and likewise, lifting the veil became a figure for the correct interpretation of the mystical meanings of Scripture, which were said to be covered by the veil of the letter. Since the time of Origen

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57 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.42 (translation modified). "non reperiens quo digno modo tristissimi patris vultus referret, pannis involuit eius caput, ut cuique plus relinqueret quod de illius dolore animo meditaretur, quam quod posset visu discernere." "non avendo in che modo mostrare la tristezza del padre, a lui avolse uno panno al capo, e così lassò si pensasse qual non si vedea suo acerbissimo merore." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.42.

58 On the Renaissance reception of this story, see Paolo Alei, " 'Obscuratas est sol': Unveiling the Hidden Divinity in Titian's Louvre 'Entombment,' " *Venezia Cinquecento* 16 (2006 (2007)), particularly 131n104. For a close reading of Alberti's use of this passage in context, with discussion also of the Christian themes examined here, see Paolo Alei " 'Intelligitur plus semper quam pingitur.' "

59 On the reception of this passage in the Middle Ages, and its use in the defence of images, see Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 53–63; Brian Britt, "Concealment, Revelation, and Gender: The Veil of Moses in the Bible and in Christian Art," *Religion and the Arts* 7 (2003). On the relevance of the veil of Moses to sixteenth-century devotional prints, see Walter S. Melion, *The Meditative Art: Studies in the Northern Devotional Print 1550–1625* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press), 5–7.

at least (c. 185–c. 254), Christian Scriptures possessed both literal and spiritual meanings (discussed in more depth in chapter five): the literal level denoted sacred history, the interpretation of which could yield further spiritual meanings relating to the moral meanings of Scripture, typological prefigurations of Christ and anagogical meanings. The mystical levels of Scripture could not be represented in words because they were not fitted to linguistic representation and therefore were covered by the "veil" of the letter. Origen wrote that if one "wants to be a Christian and a disciple of Paul . . . he ought to pray that the veil be lifted from his heart [and] . . . that he may take away the veil of the letter and open up the light of the spirit."[60] Closely related to this metaphor was the concept that Scripture was a body possessing both a body and soul.[61] Scripture was a body because the Word of God was manifest in both the body of Christ and Scripture, making the body of Scripture—the Word—the veil that covered its spirit just as the flesh of Christ was the veil that covered his soul. Alberti's "cloth," which covers an unimaginable movement of the soul, is consistent with these literary traditions. Reiterations of the trope of the veiled face in Renaissance art have been interpreted in light of both the Christian spiritual tradition and Alberti's text: for example, Paolo Alei has presented a reading of the face of Christ, veiled in shadow, in Titian's *Entombment* as relating both to the rhetorical, classical tradition, as well as Neoplatonic and Christian beliefs about the hidden divinity.[62]

Legitimately, one might doubt that Alberti was intentionally engaging with this tradition, not least of all because the story itself was taken from a pagan author. In fact, Quintilian's wording more strongly suggests the Christian tradition than Alberti's, since he uses the word "veil" whereas Alberti substitutes "cloth."[63] Regardless of Alberti's intentions, however, Alberti's sixteenth-century successors read the story of Iphigenia's sacrifice and the "cloth" as a metaphor for that which covers spiritual mystery. Francesco Bocchi, marveling at the impossibility of describing the beauty of the miraculous image

60 "et licet cujusmodi allegorias habere debeat, haud facile quis nostrum invenire possit, orare tamen debet ut a corde ejus auferatur velamen, si quis est qui conetur converti ad Dominum; 'Dominus' enim 'spiritus est'; ut ipse auferat velamen litterae et aperiat lucem spiritus." Origen, *In Genesis*, h. vi, n. 1. Both translation and Latin text are quoted in Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. E.M. Macierowski, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 5, and 230n49; the source of the original text is Origen, *Werke* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899–1959).

61 See de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 1.

62 See Alei, " 'Obscurtas est sol' "; see also by the same author " 'Intelligitur plus semper.' "

63 Quintillian, *Institutio oratoria*, 2.13.13. "quo digne modo patris vultum posset exprimere, velavit eius caput et suo cuique animo dedit aestimandum."

of the Annunciation, recalled the story of Iphigenia's sacrifice, writing that if Timanthese was praised "because he did not believe he had the force to express [so great] a pain . . . how much more reasonable [would it be to] cover [the face of the miraculous Virgin] with silence."[64] If we read Alberti in light of this tradition, as Bocchi does, he appears to suggest that a painting may manifestly represent many things but the greatest meanings exist within the viewer's imagination in concert with the painting: bodies are animated by viewers. Just as Gell finds that objects must be treated in a certain way to enliven their intentionality, so too do viewers animate paintings.

Similar themes can be perceived in Ludovico Dolce's *Dialogo della pittura*, where the author implies that paintings contain an interior meaning that may be inferred from, but not reduced to, the physical marks on the painted surface. Dolce begins by describing that which can and cannot be represented to the eye: after writing that painting is the "imitation of nature," Dolce qualifies the statement by noting that "the painter intends to imitate by way of lines and colors . . . all that which demonstrates [itself] to the eye."[65] Therefore, the painter "cannot paint things that are subject to touch . . . or to taste, like the sweetness of honey. He paints, nonetheless, the thoughts and the affections of the soul."[66] The invisible soul is represented by movements of the face "or for other signs [that make] the internal secrets appear."[67] With the seemingly casual reference to "the sweetness of honey," Dolce alludes to the convention of describing the interior spiritual meanings of Scripture as sweet like honey.[68] To be sure, the sweetness of honey was also a common motif in pagan literature, but in the Christian exegetical tradition it became associated with meanings that were "interior," since honey came from inside the hard shell of the honeycomb.[69] Origen wrote that the letters of Scripture "will be the

64 "Ed di vero se à ragione è lodato quel pittore, il quale, perche non pensava di haver forza di esprimere un dolore . . . di un velo coperse il capo questa figura." "quanto con più ragione di questo volto celeste, & rarissimo, si dee dire, il quale, se con silenzio si cuopre." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 67–68.

65 "la Pittura, brevemente parlando, non essere altro, che imitatione della Natura . . . per via di linee, e di colori . . . tutto quello, che si dimostra all'occhio." Dolce, *Dialogo*, 96.

66 "il Pittore non possa dipinger le cose, che soggiacciono al tatto . . . o al gusto; come la dolcezza del mele: dipinge non di meno i pensieri e gli affetti dell'animo." Ibid.

67 "per altri segni appariscono i segreti interni." Ibid.

68 See de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 162–177.

69 On sweetness in Homer and Vergil, see ibid., 165. On sweetness in medieval literature, see Mary Carruthers, "Sweetness," *Speculum* 81 (2006).

honeycombs, while the honey is what is understood in them."[70] Therefore, when Dolce says that these "flavors" are outside of painting's scope, he is perhaps alluding to the similarly occult mystical meanings of Scripture. By contrast, when he adds that the invisible "affections of the soul" are, nonetheless, in the domain of the painter, Dolce may be implying that when the soul is perceived through the image of the body, it has a sweetness, a pleasure, not unlike the spiritual meanings perceived through the body of Scripture.

Evidence in support of this interpretation appears later when Dolce describes the different ways of representing the nude figure: he suggests that only nudes alluding to the anatomy beneath the skin attain a quality of "sweetness" (*dolcezza*). Logically, *dolcezza* has been interpreted as a "softness" of body (seeing neither too much nor too little of the anatomy beneath the skin, such that the body appears soft); however, Dolce also uses the word *tenerezza* to describe softness suggesting that *dolcezza* may have further meanings.[71] Specifically, it seems possible that Dolce uses *dolcezza* to evoke visual experiences, like the veil of Iphigenia's father, that allude to something that lies beneath, something interior like honey in a honeycomb.

It is likewise in the context of this "sweet invisibility" that one might read the famous preface to the third part of the *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori* by Giorgio Vasari. Drawing achieves perfection, according to Vasari, when bodies convey the anatomy that lies beneath them with a kind of invisibility. In drawings of the second age, Vasari writes that drawing had not reached its perfection, since the muscles of these figures did not have that "graceful ease and sweetness that appears between the seen and the unseen, as flesh and living things have."[72] Sweetness, therefore, for Dolce and Vasari, was associated with the allusion to something interior and invisible: something suggested in the

70 "Et forte subtiliores litterae favi erunt, mel vero est qui in his est intellectus." Origen *In Isaiah*, h. ii, n. 2. Both Latin and English are quoted in de Lubac, *Medeival Exegesis*, 2: 163. The original Latin is found in Origen, *Werke* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899–1959).

71 "Ora habbiamo a considerar l'huomo in due modi, cioè nudo e vestito. Se lo formiamo nudo, lo possiamo far di due maniere: cioè o pieno di muscoli, o delicato: laqual delicatezza da Pittori è chiamata dolcezza." Dolce, *Dialogo*, 140. Note that in Roskill's translation, *dolcezza* is translated as softness, though "sweetness" may also be a suitable translation, since further on in his discussion of bodies, Dolce describes the quality of non-roughness as *tenerezza*. See, for example, ibid., 142: "Io stimo, che un corpo delicato debba anteporsi al muscoloso. e la ragione è questa, ch'è maggior fatica nell'arte a imitar le carni, che l'ossa: perche in quelle non ci va altro, che durezza, e in queste solo si contine la tenerezza."

72 "Nel disegno non v'erano gli estremi del fine suo, perche se bene e' facevano un braccio tondo & una gamba diritta; non era ricerca con muscoli con quella facilità graziosa, &

figured work, but unfolded in the mind.[73] Here, as in the miraculous image of the Annunciation and other miracle-working objects that were normally kept veiled or otherwise concealed, sweet nourishment is offered by art objects that somehow figure their interiority. The motif of the veil and associated literary figures regarding invisibility are therefore deployed by Renaissance writers to evoke the limits of representation (the soul of a painted figure), which painters must strive nonetheless to transgress: similar to reading Scripture, the painter ought to move through the body and ascend to the soul. In line with this theme, Paul Barolsky has also discussed how Vasari describes the perfection of art in Michelangelo's Last Judgment as tearing away the veil of difficulty, which Barolsky likewise reads as a scriptural reference.[74]

The many painted veils that one finds in Renaissance art are conscious allusions to this theme. The ability to depict translucency is often championed as one of painting's great advantages over sculpture; Leonardo, for instance, defends painting for its ability to depict translucency such as "veiled figures with the flesh showing through the intervening veil," an effect he exploited in images such as his *Madonna of the Yarnwinder*, in the Virgin's headdress (Figure 10).[75]

In this private devotional work, the Virgin gazes at Christ as he plays with a yarnwinder, the shape of which prefigures the crucifix.[76] The viewer thus contemplates the Christ child, yet envisions his future sacrifice in much the same way that Christian readers of the Old Testament interpret figures such

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dolce, che apparisce fral vedi, & non vedi; come fanno la carne, & le cose vive." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: ii.

73 On Francesco Bocchi's *dolcezza*, see Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture*, 198, where it is defined as "the art of hiding art," again recalling the theme of concealment. Sweetness might also be thought of with reference to gender, as an ineffable quality pertaining to feminity. On this theme, see Philip Sohm, "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995).

74 Paul Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose: A Myth and Its Maker* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 73.

75 Leonardo, *Literary Works*, 1: 98, no. 42. "non farà i corpi lucidi e trasparenti, come le figure vellate, che mostrano la nuda carne sotto i veli a quella anteposti." See also nos. 41, and 39.

76 On the iconography, original owners of the painting, and its tentative attribution to Leonardo and assistants, see Martin Kemp, "Leonardo's 'Madonna of the Yarnwinder'—the Making of a Devotional Image," in *Leonardo da Vinci: The Mystery of the Yarnwinder*, ed. Martin Kemp (Edinburgh: National Gallery of Scotland, 1992), and later reconsidered in Martin Kemp, "From scientific examination to the Renaissance market: the Case of Leonardo da Vinci's Madonna of the Yarnwinder," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24 (1994). Also see Larry J. Feinberg, "Visual Puns and Variable Perception: Leonardo's Madonna of the Yarnwinder," *Apollo* 159 (2004).

FIGURE 10 *Leonardo da Vinci,* Madonna of the Yarnwinder (*Madonna dei Fusi*) (*c. 1501*). *Pre-restoration. On loan to the National Gallery of Scotland from the Duke and the Trustees of the Buccleuch Heritage Trust. Coll. Duke of Buccleuch, Edinburgh, Scotland, Great Britain.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SNARK / ART RESOURCE, NY.

as the paschal lamb as prefigurements of Christ, thus penetrating through the veil of the letter to apprehend the spiritual meanings of sacred history: in the same way that painterly illusion has made it possible to see the Virgin's skin beneath her veil, so too does Christ's salvation make possible the true perception and understanding of sacred history.[77] The equivalency of veils and flesh has been discussed by Paul Hills, who notes that the Christ child who plays with the Madonna's veil, "a figure of Christ's flesh," in Titian's *Madonna di Ca' Pesaro*, thereby signals "that He willingly accepts His mortality."[78]

The theme is more obviously evoked in the many extant paintings of the Virgin lifting a veil to reveal the infant Christ's naked body, a motif common in nativity scenes and made famous in Raphael's the *Madonna di Loreto* (Figure 11).[79]

In this painting, the removed veil reveals the sacred mystery of the incarnate Word, just as real veils conceal the host before sacred communion.[80] As Sylvie Béguin has noted, the veil that drapes the infant Christ is the Madonna's own headdress, which, still covering her head, sweeps down behind her shoulder to cover the child's body; this detail was perhaps suggested by a passage in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, in which Mary wraps the new born in her own veil.[81] If the inspiration derives from this source, the veil might also prefigure the moment from Christ's Passion when Mary, as per the author of the *Meditations*, used her veil as a loin cloth to cover her crucified son's nude body; as such the veil is both a figure for revelation in general and also an

77 Feinberg, "Visual Puns," has argued that Christ's pose resembles the pose of St. John the Baptist in paintings by Leonardo, whose upward pointing finger referred to his role as a prophet, showing the way to Christ. The gesture may thereby again emphasize the twin themes of salvation through vision.

78 Paul Hills, "Titian's Veils," *Art History* 29 (2006), 772.

79 On the Madonna di Loreto and the tradition of this theme in art, see Sylvie Béguin, "Thème et Dérivations," in *La Madonna de Lorette*, ed. Sylvie Béguin (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1979); Cecil Gould, "Afterthoughts on Raphael's so-Called Loreto Madonna," *The Burlington Magazine* 122 (1980); Burton Fredericksen, "New Information on Raphael's 'Madonna di Loreto,' " *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 3 (1976).

80 Hills, "Titian's Veils," 775, discusses the liturgical use of veils. As also noted by Hills, for a discussion of various cloths used in the Early Modern church, see Benedetta Montevecchi and Sandra Vasco Rocca, eds., *Suppellettile ecclesiastica 1* (Florence: Centro Di, 1988), particularly chapter 3, "La biancheria e le coperture sacre."

81 See Béguin, "Thème et Dérivations," 41. See *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 27: "When this was done, she (wrapped Him in the veil from her head and) laid Him in the manger." See also Bonaventure, *Le Meditazioni sulla vita di Cristo*, in *Mistici del duecento e del trecento*, ed. Arrigo Levasti (Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1935), 425: "E poi lo fasciò con esso il velo di capo, e puoselo nella mangiatoia."

FIGURE 11 *Raphael* (*Raffaello Sanzio*), Madonna di Loreto (*c. 1509*). *Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.*
PHOTO CREDIT: ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE, NY.

allusion to a historical moment of Christ's Passion.[82] As a polysemic figure, the veil repeatedly evokes the process of looking beyond the literal representation and penetrating deeper into spiritual mysteries. Indeed, the process of "penetrative looking" is reflected in the very rituals in which the painting was used. For instance, Vasari notes that a version of this painting in Santa Maria

82 See *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 333.

del Popolo in Rome was kept concealed except on certain feast days, thereby replicating the process of covering and revelation represented in the painting.[83] The naturalistic effect of translucency is not simply a trope for revelation; it integrates rituals of concealment and unwrapping within the very form of the painting.[84] Vasari also reports that the painting's companion panel, a portrait of Pope Julius II, was "so true and lifelike that it brought fear to see it, as though it were the living person," again suggesting how naturalistic effects of lifelikeness contribute to and reinforce the devotional patterns of concealment and revelation that augment the painting's "presence."[85] The Virgin is a subject particularly relevant to veil imagery since her flesh, as the vessel through which Christ entered the world, both carried and then revealed the Word of God; consequently, drawn curtains often appear in images of the Virgin and Child, recalling the Virgin's role in revelation, and are famously found in another painting by Raphael of Julius II and the Virgin: the *Sistine Madonna*.[86]

Therefore, veils in Renaissance art do not merely figure a spiritual commonplace; rather, translucency was fascinating to Renaissance viewers because it alluded to the inside of the painting in the same way that real veils were used in rituals of concealment to enhance the interior presence of sacred objects. Likewise, the skins of painted figures resembled veils—both real and painted—because they were conduits to interiority. In Renaissance art literature, skin and fabric were functionally similar in that they both revealed the workings of the soul: Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, for instance, dedicates a chapter of his *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura e architettura* to the technique of painting fabrics, and includes it in the part of his treatise on the depiction of motion in painting, a section mostly comprised of different facial expressions and gestures. Lomazzo never claims that clothes are a second skin, but it is clear that the folds of cloth must respond to the movements of the body, thus emphasizing the appropriate passion being experienced by the depicted

83 The paintings were reportedly displayed on two pilasters, perhaps at the front of the church as suggested by Jakob Pfau, cited in Sylvie Béguin, "La Madone de Lorette de Raphael," in *La Madonna de Lorette*, ed. Sylvie Béguin (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1979), 6.

84 The painting is also mentioned in the manuscript known as the Anonimo Magliabecchiano written around 1544–46; see Fredericksen, "New Information on Raphael's 'Madonna di Loreto,'" 5.

85 "tanto vivo, & verace, che faceva temere il ritratto a vederlo, come se proprio egli fosse il vivo." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 72.

86 The tradition of Mary being depicted behind opened curtains and the theme of revelation in the *Sistine Madonna* are discussed in Johann Konrad Eberlein, "The Curtain in Raphael's Sistine Madonna," *The Art Bulletin* 65 (1983), 67–70.

figure. The folds of a fabric, he writes, must abide by the living body; they "must run out in every direction, not unlike the branches from the trunk of a tree, so that one fold is born from another as one branch grows from another."[87] The ideal fabric, like fine wool, will be easily "moved by air, and hold to human members . . . making beautiful and temperate folds [which] follow the nude [body] well."[88] The interest in emotive fabrics is everywhere evident in Renaissance art; one thinks, for instance, of the hyperactive folds that envelope the young female attendant in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of the Virgin* at Santa Maria Novella. Indeed, Lomazzo warns against the desire to be carried away by folds by creating clothes that demonstrate the effort of "great study and industry" rather than "grace and facility."[89]

Lomazzo states that another potential error involves painting clothes that appear too stiff, as though they were made by drawing a model figurine clothed with paper, a caution that in fact echoes a similar proscription stipulated in Leonardo's notebooks (according to Vasari, however, Leonardo used to drape clay models with clay-soaked fabric for his studies).[90] Such techniques may have in fact been common: Piero della Francesca reportedly painted with the aid of draped figurines, though Vasari informs us that he used wet cloths rather than paper to drape his clay models "with infinite folds."[91] Though Lomazzo finds such techniques deficient, it is tempting to suppose that painters may have adopted them in part in imitation of rituals through which votaries became more spiritually intimate with their subjects: intentionally or not, Piero's technique borrows a devotional practice associated with religious sculpture and adopts it to naturalistic painting. For instance, members of the

87 "hanno da scorrere in tutte le parti, non altrimenti che rami da tronco d'arboro; & cosi fare, che una piega nasca dall'altra, come esce l'uno dall'altro ramo, overo onda da onda." Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, 182.

88 "iquali perciò si lasciano convenevolmente muovere dall'aria, & reggere dalle membra humane per loro commodo; & cosi facendo bellisimi, & temperate falde, seguono il nudo benissimo, & ancora vanno leggiadra, & vagamente scherzando intorno à' lumbi." Ibid., 183.

89 "che mostrino più tosto gratia, & facilità, che maraviglia d'affettato studio, & gran fatica." Ibid., 182.

90 "Un'altro mancamento sì scorge anco ne'panni de i vecchi pittori, che paiano fatti in certo modo à scaglie, secondo che gli cavavano da modelli d'huomini cred'io vestiti di carta." Ibid., 184. For the same idea in Leonardo, see *Literary Works*, 1: 270, no. 392. See also Vasari, *Vite* 2: 2: "& qualche volta in far medagli di figure di terra, & adosso a quelle metteva cenci molli interrati."

91 "Usò assai Piero di far modelli di terra, & a quelli metter sopra panni molli con infinità di pieghe, per ritrarli e servirsene." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 356.

spiritual movement known as the Bianchi, which swept through Italy in 1399, used to drape wooden crucifixes with plaster-dipped loincloths.[92] The dressers of such wooden crucifixes engaged intimately with Christ's body, in fact re-enacting the actions of Mary, who, as noted above, took off her veil to dress Christ as he hung on the cross without a loincloth.[93] This practice extended beyond the Bianchi movement; Brunelleschi's nude, crucified Christ at Santa Maria Novella was possibly clothed with a loincloth, since the genitals are only roughly delineated, though certain features, such as pubic hair and dripping blood, may have been designed to be seen beneath a low-hanging cloth, as depicted in Masaccio's *Trinity* in the same church (Figure 12).[94]

Beyond simply suggesting that Piero "got the idea" to dress models from such spiritual practices, the similarity between the lived ritual of dressing sculptures and the artistic practice of making dressed models for painterly study suggests the possibility that spiritual practices were interpolated into the process of naturalistic painting: Piero was able to figure the interiority of sacred figures, both through evoking their inner thoughts on their painted flesh and by dressing them in appropriate clothes, because he had knowledge of the natural world with which to envision sacred history, and because in his studies he was privy to the same spiritual intimacy experienced by those who dressed sacred sculptures. Though Piero's method may carry spiritual overtones, it is also Albertian since he was making figures by starting with the bones and layering outward.[95] This gave him a special knowledge of the interior of the figure, but—at least when perfected in the third age of Renaissance art—this

92 See Trexler, "Dressing and Undressing Images," 391. Trexler's source is M. Lisner, *Holzkruzifixe in Florenz und in der Toskana* (Munich, 1970), 56. Stiffened fabrics were also used in other contexts; for instance, in the *vita* of Verrocchi, Vasari reports how cloth dipped in wax was used to create ex-voto figures such as those offered to the Virgin at the SS. Annunziata; see Megan Holmes "Ex-votos: Materiality, Memory, and Cult," in *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, ed. Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 171.

93 See *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 333.

94 See Philip P. Fehl, "The Naked Christ in Santa Maria Novella in Florence: Reflections on an Exhibition and the Consequences," *Storia dell'Arte* 45 (1982).

95 Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.36. This passage, and the issue of divinity in art relating to knowledge of the body and making images appear alive, have been discussed by Stephen J. Campbell, " 'Fare una Coas Morta Parer Viva': Michelangelo, Rosso and the (Un) Divinity of Art," *The Art Bulletin* 84 (2002).

FIGURE 12 *Filippo Brunelleschi*, Crucifixion (*c. 1410–15*). *Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy.* PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

knowledge remains mysterious to the viewer: as Vasari says, in the finished body such knowledge will appear to hover between the seen and unseen.[96]

96 The mysterious knowledge of artists and makers of sacred objects is also a theme in Gell's *Art and Agency*, 144–145, particularly when he discusses how makers of sacred objects conceal secret substances inside these objects, which contributes to their "unknowable" interiority. This theme is also evoked in Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and

It is plausible that Vasari's comment is an accurate description of Piero's technique, since there is a strong interest in drapery and half-dressed figures in Piero's work.[97] Piero's cycle of the *Legend of the True Cross* at Arezzo, for instance, features many figures that are in a state of semi-undress. Two men burying the cross have clothes that appear to be falling away from them: the scrotum of one man is even visible through a gap in his loincloth, and each fold of remaining clothing is articulated with such precision that it seems possible a stiffened cloth may have served as a model (Figure 13). Also, in the *Baptism of Christ*, a catechumen is depicted in a state of semi-undress, and Christ is dressed only in a thin veil (Figure 14).

In the case of the *Baptism*, the meaning of the partial nudity is well understood: Christ, by redeeming man, has made it possible for us to shed the clothing that we have put on in shame and in sin since the fall of man, and hence, the catechumen thematizes the undressing that Christ makes possible.[98] In the *True Cross* cycle, the interest in shed clothing perhaps relates again to the idea that salvation permits reunification with God, and thus the removal of sin and shame, of which clothing, made necessary by Adam and Eve, is emblematic. The theme is particularly relevant in this cycle that illustrates the history of the cross upon which Christ was crucified from the time it grew over Adam's grave. A related theme, in the *Baptism* panel, is the transparent water at Christ's feet, which shows the precise point at which the water's surface turns from reflection to transparency.[99] In this detail, Piero may have sought to evoke the traditional story that the Jordan River became still at the time of Christ's baptism, but its transparency may also relate to the broader issue of revelation permitting penetration of veils, or spiritual insight:[100] like veils, Scripture was often compared to a river through which it was possible to gaze deeply in some

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the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

97 On Piero's attention to representations of clothing see Jane Bridgeman, " 'Troppo belli e troppo eccellenti': Observations on Dress in the Work of Piero della Francesca," in *The Cambridge Companion to Piero della Francesca*, ed. Jeryldene M. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

98 The figure may also be putting on his clothing, in which case he is putting on a bridal garment, having married Christ in Baptism. On both of these interpretations, see Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *Piero della Francesca's Baptism of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 109–113.

99 John Shearman, "The Logic and Realism of Piero della Francesca," in *Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf*, ed. A. Kosegarte and P. Tigler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968), 184n5; cited in Aronberg Lavin, *Piero della Francesca's Baptism*, 52n3.

100 On the many allusions that the river Jordan may suggest, see Aronberg Lavin, *Piero della Francesca's Baptism*, 39–52.

FIGURE 13 *Piero della Francesca*, Legend of the True Cross: Burial of the Wood (*c. 1450–65*). *San Francesco, Arezzo, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA/MINISTERO PER IBENI E LE ATTIVITÀCULTURALI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

FIGURE 14 *Piero della Francesca,* The Baptism of Christ *(1450s). National Gallery, London, Great Britain.*
© NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON / ART RESOURCE, NY.

areas and only with more difficulty in others.[101] It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Leonardo lists the transparency of water alongside diaphanous veils in his inventory of visual effects painters can imitate, and indeed, with Verrocchio, he contributed to a painting of the *Baptism of Christ* that features a similarly transparent Jordan River.[102] Thus, painted water and veils both recall the theme of salvation and spiritual insight, while also materially demonstrating that the painter is capable of revealing what lies beneath the surface.

The skins, veils and clothing of painted figures became, therefore, a locus for imagining the interiority of the painting, evoking the cognate themes of the unveiling of Scripture and the redemption made possible through Christ. This conflation of meanings made undressed flesh both a highly desired yet at the same time potentially problematic sight for Early Modern viewers. This conflict arose due to the inherent sexual appeal of flesh: in the sense that nudity was a sign of innocence from sin, it was sanctioned; in the sense that it might encourage improper lust, it was discouraged. Hence the metaphor of the veil is also evoked in sexual contexts: sexual experiences were often evoked with the metaphor of the pierced veil, as in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, in which Venus is concealed behind a veil which the narrator Poliphilo must tear with an arrow.[103] The veil was thus also a figure of sexual modesty: for example, Juan Luis Vives writes that "chastity is a kind of veil placed over our face."[104]

The conflict between sexuality and spirituality also emerges in Renaissance literature on art, and is clearly evident in Vasari's *Vite* of three friar-painters: Fra Bartolommeo, Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi.[105] The themes of dressing and undressing permeate Fra Bartolommeo's *vita*: Vasari notes, for instance, that, like Piero della Francesca, Fra Bartolommeo kept a "model made of wood, as big as life-size . . . and clothed it with real clothes," to create life-like paintings.[106] Vasari connects the theme of dressing and undressing to spirituality when

101 See Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebank, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1998), introduction.

102 On Leonardo and water see *Literary Works*, 1: 98, nos. 41 and 42.

103 The veil imagery of this sequence is discussed by Hills, "Titian's Veils," 775.

104 Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 112–13, "Hoc est velum quoddam nostrae faciei."

105 For a discussion of these *vite* that contextualizes them within the history of the religious orders during Vasari's time, see Dónal J. O'Connor, "Arist Friars of the Renaissance in Georgio Vasari," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 63 (1998).

106 "per poter ritrar panni & arme & altre simil cose fecie fare un modello di legno grande quanto il vivo che si snodava nelle congenture, & quello vestiva con panni naturali." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 40.

he describes how one of Savonarola's sermons, on the immorality of keeping "painted figures of men and women nude," moved Fra Bartolommeo to burn all his nude studies.[107] Given this self-censorship, it is not surprising to learn later that Fra Bartolommeo had a reputation for not being able to paint nudes, though the painter, despite having supported Savonarolan reforms, eventually acknowledges this defect as a shortcoming and challenges himself to paint a nude St. Sebastian. Once completed, the realism of the painting wins "infinite praise from artists"; however, proving Savonarola's fears correct, the painting causes women to sin because of the "graceful (*leggiadra*) and lascivious (*lasciva*) imitation of life given [to the figure] by Fra Bartolommeo," for which reason it is thereby removed to a chapter house.[108] The story exhibits the tensions regarding flesh, spirituality and sexuality noted above: like spiritual mysteries which are dangerous in the wrong hands, and are therefore kept covered by a veil, the painting must be kept more deeply within the Church building and only be seen by a select few: by being relocated to a space frequented primarily by monks the image is placed in a setting of higher spiritual value, and is thus protected by the social skin of the church and its members. The painting is both a naked body open to licentious gazes and also a naked spiritual mystery needing to be kept out of the wrong hands. This point is further emphasized when Vasari describes the special illusionistic frame that Bartolommeo painted onto the work in order to avoid having to build a real frame that would obscure the focal image, a detail that highlights how St. Sebastian, like the painting itself, lies nude without mediating covers or enclosures.[109]

The connection between nudity and spirituality is restated in the *vita* of Fra Giovanni of Fiesole, or Fra Angelico. Having praised the Friar for creating his works with a religious cast of mind, unlike some whose paintings make "dishonest appetites and lascivious desires come into the mind," Vasari then

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107 "fu persuaso che non era bene tenere in casa, dove son fanciulle; figure dipinte di huomini & donne ignude . . . dove Baccio porto tutto lo studio de disegni che egli aveva fatto degli ingnudi." Ibid., 2: 36.

108 "dove infinite lode acquistò appresso agli artefici;" "havevano trovato i frati nelle confessioni, donne che nel guardarlo havevano peccato per la leggiadra e lasciva imitazione del vivo, datagli dalla virtù di Fra Bartolomeo." Ibid., 2: 39.

109 "Haveva preso collera fra Bartolomeo con i legniaioli che gli facevano alle tavole, et quadri gli ornamenti, i quali havevan per costume come hanno anche hoggi di coprire con i battitoi delle cornice sempre uno ottavo delle figure la dove fra Bartolomeo deliberò di trovare una invenzione di non fare alle tavole ornamenti: & a questo San Bastiano fecie fare la tavola in mezzo tondo & vi tiro una nichia in prospettiva che par di rilievo in cavata nella tavola, & così con le cornici dipinte atorno: fece ornamento a la figura di mezzo." Ibid., 2: 39.

cautions that not all works with beautifully painted holy figures are to be censured.[110] Those who make such criticisms, he writes

> do not realize that they wrongfully condemn the good judgment of the painter, who holds the saints, who are celestial, to be so much more beautiful than mortal beauty . . . and what is worse, they reveal their infirm and corrupt soul, finding evil and dishonest wishes in such things from which—if they loved honesty as much as they wished to demonstrate by their tasteless zeal—would bring to them [the painter's] desire for heaven and to make [his figures] acceptable to the creator of all things . . .[111]

Naked flesh, therefore, both reveals the interior thoughts of the figured personage as much as it reveals that which lies in the viewer's mind: either their immorality or piety. This makes skin a volatile quantity since its substance changes with each viewer; but this is natural since, as has been discussed above, the intentionality or agency of the work of art is given to the object by the social culture that animates it, either through gifts, procession, or ritual devotions such as the processes of veiling and unveiling described above. Painted skin therefore is like an empty box, which may become filled with the gazes of devoted viewers: to the truly pious viewer it reveals the holy soul concealed beneath the figured skin and to the impious it becomes a hard shell reflecting only licentious feelings. Skin requires therefore a hermeneutic gaze: just as Scripture needs to be read according to certain laws in order to unearth its hidden sweetness, so too does skin demand the viewer to look with piety.

The antithesis to Fra Angelico is Fra Filippo Lippi, in whose *vita* the themes of mixed sexuality and spirituality are prominent. Leaving the Carmelite Convent for a worldly career, he is captivated by animal lust. Like the women who lust after Fra Bartolommeo's St. Sebastian, he misplaces his own lust on a

110 "quando cotali cose sono operate da persone, che poco credino, e poco stimano la religione, che spesso fanno cadere in mente appetiti disonesti, e voglie lascive." Ibid., 1: 362.

111 "ma io non vorrei già che alcuno s'ingannasse interpretando il goffo, & inetto, devoto, & il bello, e buono, lascivo; come fanno alcuni, i quali vedendo figure, o di femina, o di giovane un poco piu vaghe, e piu belle, & adorne che l'ordinario le pigliano subito, e giudicano per lascive non si avedendo, che a gran torto dannano il buon giudizio del pittor, il quale tiene i santi, e sante, che sono celesti, tanto piu belli della natura mortale, quanto avanza il cielo la terrena bellezza, e l'opere nostre: e che è peggio, scuoprono l'animo loro infetto e corrotto, cavando male, e voglie disoneste di quelle cose; delle quali, se e fussino amatori dell'honesto, come in quel loro zelo sciocco vogliono dimostrare, verrebbe loro disiderio del cielo: e di farsi accetti al Creatore di tutte le cose, dal quale perfettissimo, & bellissimo nasce ogni perfezzione e bellezza." Ibid., 1: 362.

"spiritual" thing: in his case, a young novice, Lucrezia, who he wishes to use as a model for the Virgin.[112] Clothing once again plays a central role in Filippo's life: he kidnaps the young novice on the day she is to see the girdle of the Virgin, the garment Mary removes to demonstrate her corporeal ascension and likewise an emblem of her own modesty.[113] Mario Rosa proposes that the rituals of displaying and hiding the girdle, which was usually kept concealed in Prato and only revealed on certain feast days, such as the birth of the Virgin and Christmas, mirrored the function of a real girdle, which would wrap a woman's stomach, only to be untied during pregnancy.[114] The viewing of the girdle, especially on days of the liturgical calendar particularly associated with birth, therefore celebrates the Virgin's miraculous, sexually chaste pregnancy; some of the girdle's recorded miracles are likewise associated with aiding difficult births.[115] By robbing Lucrezia of the chance to see the girdle, Vasari illustrates how Filippo Lippi perverts things (both Lucrezia and the Virgin's garment) that are meant to be sexually and spiritually pure, by making them accomplices to his sensual appetite. Ironically, unlike Fra Bartolommeo, who excels in painting the nude St. Sebastian, Vasari notes that Filippo Lippi is known for his paintings of historically accurate dress.[116] Hence, where he fails in creating images of spiritually beautiful nudity, he excels at depicting the very garments that sin requires us to wear. Although Vasari presents reactions to beautiful flesh in sacred art as either proper or improper, it is possible that he exaggerates

112 "fra Filippo dato d'occhio alla Lucrezia; che cosi era il nome della fanciulla, la quale haveva bellissima grazia, & aria, tanto operò con le monache, che ottenne di farne un ritratto, per metterlo in una figura di N. Donna, per l'opra loro. E con questa occasione innamoratosi maggiormente, fece poi tanto per via di mezi, & di pratiche, che egli sviò la Lucrezia da le monache, e la menò via il giorno appunto, ch'ella andava a vedere mostrar la cintola di N. Donna, honorata reliquia di quel Castello." Ibid., 1: 388. The historical probability of this story is evaluated in Megan Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi: The Carmelite Painter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 9–11.

113 Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 388.

114 On the history of the relic, see Mario Rosa, "Dalla 'religione civica' alla 'pietà illuminata': la Cintola della Vergine di Prato," *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 38 (2002), 251. On the pictorial tradition of the girdle see Brendan Cassidy, "A Relic, Some Picture and the Mothers of Florence in the Late Fourteenth Century," *Gesta* 30 (1991).

115 On the feast days during which the girdle was exhibited, see Rosa "Dalla 'religione civica' alla 'pietà illuminata,' " 249.

116 "Sonvi alcuni panni di cocolle di frati che hanno bellissime pieghe, e meritano infinite lodi, per lo buon disegno"; "sonvi alcune figure con abbigliamenti in quel tempo poco usati, dove cominciò a destare gli animi delle genti, a uscire di quella semplicità, che piu tosto vecchia, che antica si puo nominare." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 388.

these differences knowing that neither one is completely possible without the other.

In the context of these examples, it is possible to see how Alberti's retelling of the story of Iphigenia's sacrifice contains in essence many themes concerning the inimaginability of flesh that would continue to occupy the minds of sixteenth-century writers: it is the exterior that reveals the interiority of the painting, tempting the viewer to penetrate beneath its surface; likewise, just as Timanthes left the viewer to imagine that which he could not paint, skin reveals to us the contents of our own souls. The cloth that both covers the face and yet reveals the soul corresponds with the real veils that covered paintings, encouraging viewers to likewise imagine what lay beneath while constructing an interior-exterior relationship around the art object. Far from being a peripheral aspect of Renaissance art, creating an interior presence within the work of art—through such strategies as emotive skin and flesh, and translucent veils—may have been one of the painter's essential tasks.

Perfection of Body and Soul: The Souls of Artists and of Paintings

Having been used to explore some of the meanings of painted flesh in Early Modern Italian culture in the previous section, the story of Iphigenia's father leads also into further issues regarding the tasks of representing holy figures in sacred narratives and engages with an issue central to Christian image-making: the legitimacy of sacred images. Since the story locates the limits of painterly representation on a particular face, it is natural that it should conjure up the permissibility of sacred images, given that, in Christian culture, the sanction on images hinged on Christ's visibility.[117] Herbert Kessler has explored how Moses' prohibition of images in the Old Testament was inoperative in Christianity because the incarnation of God in Christ calls upon man to witness his body.[118] The presence of Christ-sanctioned images not made by human hand ("acheiropoieton"), such as Veronica's veil, were also mobilized to defend the use of images in Christian culture. An early version of the legend of one such contact-relic, the Holy Face of Edessa, in fact contains several elements in common with the story of Timanthes's painting of Iphigenia: Ananias, being charged to paint a portrait of Christ from life, is unable to complete the images because of the light shining from Christ's face; accordingly, Christ wiped his face on a

117 See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 149–155.

118 See Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing*, 29–52.

cloth thereby impressing his likeness onto it, which then served as a portrait.[119] Both stories feature an unrepresentable face which is both concealed and then revealed by a cloth: in the case of Iphigenia's father the cloth invites the spectator to mentally visualize his face, whereas for Ananias the cloth carries the face on it. If the legend of the Holy Face of Edessa was invoked to permit the creation of sacred images, or at least the copying of divinely sanctioned prototypes, it also suggests that painting Christ's face was just as difficult as Iphigenia's grief-stricken father. What was it that made the face of one man—Christ—more difficult to imagine than any other? If the sacrifice of Iphigenia becomes in the Renaissance context, as I have proposed, a trope for sacred and scriptural mysteries, it would appear that, like Scripture's interior, spiritual meanings, some souls were beyond artistic representation. Christ's divine soul, though clothed by human flesh, is the ultimate example of this difficulty. If incarnation commands us to bear witness to Christ's bodily presence on earth, and if paintings of figures must reveal the soul, then the painter of Christ's image is called upon to know and somehow represent what is beyond representation. The remainder of this chapter explores how Renaissance art theory approached this problem: by analyzing variations on the Iphigenia story, I address how artists wrestled with the problem of representing the divine soul via the divine face, focusing specifically on the demands this placed on the artist's soul.

Painters of Christ's image had to reveal his perfect soul on his flesh and therefore through the material of paint. But, given that every sacred painting, whether or not it figured Christ, had to do Christ's work, all sacred art had to have a similar Christian virtue. The virtue of a work of art was revealed not strictly by its physically visible properties, but its soul: thus, the painted body of Christ had to reveal His perfect soul and likewise sacred art in general had to contain a virtuous soul. Most Renaissance literature appears to address the challenges related to creating the "body" of a painting, which could be seen plainly on the painted surface. This is evident in the discussions of naturalistic painting techniques found in many treatises on painting, which are primarily concerned for the visual appearance of a painting. However, as shall be explored here, it was equally important to create the soul of a painting, though the means by which it was created were, like the soul itself, difficult to describe. The soul of a painting exceeded the sum of its visible parts; just as a face may indicate the invisible movements of the soul inhabiting the body, likewise the surface appearance of a painting might reveal the painting's soul, though the soul could not be reduced to these physical elements. Rather, the

119 For a fuller account of this story, see ibid., 70–71.

soul of a painting flowed from the soul of the artist and as such its quality did not concern technique but rather the artist's virtue. Consequently, the perfect soul was unattainable by human artists, though constantly desired. This point is made by several Renaissance authors who rehearse the Iphigenia-type story, though modified significantly, and in so doing use it as a vehicle to indicate the ways through which the artist must prepare his or her soul for painting.

The premise for this argument is laid out in Dante's *Convivio* (c. 1304–07). In one passage the poet discusses the true source of man's nobility, arguing that nobility and virtue were generated by the soul and were recognizable only in the soul's works. He rejects the idea that nobility could be conferred by birth, inheritance or possession of riches, "for riches cannot . . . either give gentility or take away, since in their nature they are base."[120] Rather, arguing that nobility was a product of the soul and thus achieved only by the free will, Dante writes that "the definition of nobleness would be more suitably drawn from its effects than from its sources . . . [because it] cannot be made known by the things that precede it but by the things that follow from it."[121] A man's soul was virtuous, therefore, only if it acted virtuously, ultimately an Aristotelian precept.

As an example, Dante proposes that nobility proceeds from the soul in the same way that a painting is formed first in the mind of the painter: "[he] who paints a figure, unless himself can be it, cannot set it down."[122] Later, expanding these words, Dante writes, "wherefore no painter could set down any figure unless he had first in intention become such as the figure is to be."[123] At the most basic level, Dante explains that when one's soul clings to virtue—as the painter's mind clings to the figure it wishes to paint—one's actions become noble. Therefore, one could not be virtuous without having within oneself the form of virtue, just as a painter could not paint the chair without that form in his or her mind. As will be demonstrated below, much

120 Dante Alighieri, *The Convivio of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed, (London: Dent, 1904), 225. "ché le divizie, sì come si crede,/ non posson gentilezza dar né tôrre,/ però che vili son da lor natura." Dante Alighieri, *Il convivio*, ed. Maria Simonelli, (Bologna: Casa Editrice R. Patron, 1966), 125.

121 Dante, *The Convivio*, 278. "ché la diffinizione de la nobilitade più degnamente si fa[ri]e da li effetti che da' principii, con ciò sia cosa che essa paia avere ragione di principio, che non si può notificare per cose prime, ma per posteriori." Dante, *Il convivio*, 159.

122 Dante, *The Convivio*, 225. "poi chi pinge figura,/ se non può esser lei, non la può porre." Dante, *Il convivio*, 126.

123 Dante, *The Convivio*, 279. "Onde nullo dipintore potrebbe porre alcuna figura, se intenzionalmente non si facesse prima tale, quale la figura essere dee." Dante, *Il convivio*, 160. On this passage and "ogni dipintore dipigne se" in light of Florentine Platonism, see Chastel, *Art et humanisme à Florence*, part 2, chapter 2.

sixteenth-century literature appears to conflate these two points, proposing that a painter could only paint a virtuous image if the mind was clinging to the form of virtue, and thereby acting virtuously. The theme is obviously related to the maxim "every painter paints himself," discussed in the previous chapter; here I explore how this belief prescribed limits to the field of representation.

A conventional story, apparently derived from the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia about a painter having difficulty imagining the face of someone particularly virtuous, becomes a trope for the limits of painterly representation. Perhaps the most well-known example of the story of an "unimaginable face" (apart from the original retelling by Alberti) occurs in Vasari's biography of Leonardo, in which the artist is confounded by the task of representing perfect virtue on the face of Christ in his *Cenacolo* in Milan. As in the story of Iphigenia, Leonardo is praised for representing passion on the faces of other figures: the apostles' souls were each filled with "all of their love, fear, and indignation."[124] However, Leonardo "left [the face] of Christ imperfect, thinking that . . . he could not give Him that celestial divinity, which to the head of Christ is required."[125] Therefore, the issue is not the extreme emotion of Christ's face, but rather his incredible virtue. So great was this divinity that Leonardo "did not wish to look for it on earth," nor could he "conceive in his imagination, [of] that beauty and celestial grace, [that] there must be in that incarnate divinity."[126] Leonardo could not hope to form in his mind the face within which such divinity could be seen, and as such, he would "stay half the day sometimes abstracted in consideration" and "looking for inventions with his mind."[127] Vasari does not criticize but rather seems to praise Leonardo, writing that he would begin many things, though

> none did he ever finish, seeming that the hand could not meet the perfection of the art of the things that he had imagined, since he formed in his

124 "si vede nel viso di tutti loro l'amore, la paura, & lo sdegno." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 6.

125 "& alle teste de gli Apostoli diede tanta maestà, & bellezza; che quella del Christo lasciò imperfetta; non pensando poterle dare quella divinità celeste, che a l'imagine di Christo si richiede." Ibid.

126 "della quale non voleva cercare in terra: & non poteva tanto pensare, che nella imaginazione, gli paresse poter concipere quella bellezza; & celeste grazia, che dovette essere quella de la divinità incarnata." Ibid.

127 "starsi un mezzo giorno per volta astratto in consideratione;" "cercando con la mente l'invenzioni." Ibid.

> idea some difficulties so subtle and so marvelous, that hands would never be able to express them, even though his were excellent.[128]

As in the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the difficulty of Leonardo's inventions, visible only in his mind, allude to mystical or spiritual meanings to which the rational mind of man was granted understanding, though made unable to fully express. It is, therefore, a testament to Leonardo's greatness that these inventions were imaginable to him in the first place and the unfinished quality of his works testify to the divinity of his inventions. The limits of matter in contrast to the limits of the imagination are frequently thematized in Leonardo's *vita*; Leonardo searches for the darkest ground with which to make blacker shadows,[129] his equestrian statue is left unfinished for technical reasons,[130] and he fears that his hands will be unable to render what his imagination has conceived. The unfinished state is therefore similar to the veil that likewise encourages the mind to fill in what has not been completely articulated. Similarly, it may be relevant to consider Leonardo's *sfumato*—the smoky, blurred boundaries in his paintings, meant to convey the density of air—which obscures the subject's face (particularly in later works, such as his *St. John the Baptist*) in relation to these themes. In fact, Raffaello Borghini described how painters should colour the figures in their paintings who recede into the background in such a way that they "appear, in a certain way to be veiled."[131]

Vasari's story about Leonardo is therefore a retelling of both the Timanthes story, and early legends about the unrepresentability of Christ's face, though within the context of the *vita* the story bears upon the related themes of unfinishedness, and the limits of the imagination. A series of publications retelling

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128 "nessuna mai ne finì, parendoli, che la mano aggiugnere non potesse alla perfezzione dell'arte ne le cose, che egli s'imaginava, conciosia, che si formava nell'idea alcune dificultà sottili, e tanto maravigliose, che con le mani ancora, ch'elle fussero eccellentissime, non si sarebbono espresse mai." Ibid., 2: 3. In the first edition of the *Vite*, Vasari included a passage about Leonardo's rejection of Christianity in favor of philosophy, omitted in the second edition, which helped fuel the myth that Leonardo was not Christian or not religious (though, as demonstrated in chapter three, Leonardo clearly self-identified as a Christian).

129 "havendo desiderio di dare sommo rilievo alle cose, che egli faceva, andava tanto con lombre scure a trovare i fondi de piu scuri, che cercava neri, che ombrassino, & fussino piu scuri degl'altri neri, per fare del chiaro mediante quegli fussi più lucido." Ibid., 2: 5.

130 "Et tanto grande lo cominciò, & riuscì, che condur non si potè mai." Ibid., 2: 7.

131 "l'ultime figure sieno di tutte l'altre piu scure, e quel poco che hanno di chiarezza apparisca in un certo modo velata, che paia si vada dagli occhi allontanando." Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 183–184.

the legend of the miraculous image of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence further develop this story and its implications for the theory of art.[132] Within these retellings one perceives a relationship between Renaissance literature on art and Early Modern spiritual literature since these texts demonstrate how visualizing a holy face was intimately related to the quality of the artist's soul and, as such, how "seeing" was attained through prayer and meditation.[133] The earliest of the texts to be considered here is Michele Poccianti's *Vite de' sette beati fiorentini*, a hagiographical history of the founders of the Order of the Servites, written in 1567 and then published in Italian by Fra Luca Ferrini in 1589. Having founded the church of the SS Annunziata in Florence, the first Servites commissioned a painter "whose name is known only to God" to create the painting in 1252.[134] Poccianti writes that

> after he had effigized the Angel, he painted the whole figure of the Madonna save for the head, about which the more the master tired himself, the more he created difficulties for himself; now it seemed to him that the drawing of the face did not correspond to the bust, now that the position was ineptly accommodated, now that the eyes did not show that spirit . . . [finally] it befell him, as of those who presume to climb the high mountains of divine secrets: the more they climb, the more arduous they find the steps and the greater the climb.[135]

The problems that afflict the anonymous painter are similar to the problems that Alberti predicted painters would face, having warned that the heads of their figures might appear as though not part of the same body, that there may be problems in the gesture, and that it would be difficult to show

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132 Many legends about the origins of the cult have been explored in Holmes, "The Elusive Origins." The legend as told by Francesco Bocchi is also considered by Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 276.

133 In this case, it may equally be argued that the line of influence moved in the opposite direction, since Alberti and Vasari were published before these spiritual texts.

134 "il cui nome è solo noto a Dio." Poccianti, *Vite de' sette*, 76.

135 "qual poi che hebbe effigiato l'Angiolo dipinse tutta la figura della madonna salvo la testa, intorno alla quale quanto più s'affaticava il Maestro, tanto più s'apparecchiavano difficultà; hora gli pareva che il disegno della faccia non corrispondesse al busto, hora che la positura fusse inettamente accommodata, hora che gli occhi non mostrassero quello spirito . . . in terveniva di lui, come di quelli, che ascender presummano gli alti monti de'secreti divini, quali quanto più saggono, più trovano ardui i passi & maggiore la salita." Ibid., 76–77.

the spirit.[136] Eschewing further study, however, the anonymous painter of the Annunciation eventually concludes that his inability to paint the figure "had proceeded from his sins [so] he resolved to confess and to take communion."[137] Having done this, he "put in place all of his instruments, climbed the scaffolding to finish the blessed figure, but when he lifted the cloth that kept it covered . . . he found that it had already been finished."[138] The painter immediately recognized the face to be the work of God, and began exclaiming, sighing, and weeping; the "unveiling" of the painting being equivalent to taking "away the veil of the letter." Notably, this story differs from the story of Leonardo by reference to the painter's sins. By confessing and taking communion in order to overcome the inability to see, the painter illustrates the relationship between piety and sight in hagiographical literature. In so much hagiographical literature and meditational literature of the Early Modern period, the gift of sight is both to be worked toward by the votary as well as given through acts of grace by God. To take one example, in Poccianti's text, the founders of the Servites are often blessed with divine visions following meditation, prayer, or taking of the sacraments. The first heavenly communication given to the founders of the Servites came "while singing the praises of Maria the Virgin their advocate, on the day of her . . . assumption."[139]

In an expanded version of this legend in the *Corona di sessanta tre miracoli della Nunziata di Firenze*, a book of the painting's miracles written by Fra Luca Ferrini, the anonymous painter's "visual block" is described in more depth. The painting process Ferrini describes is not essentially different from that as described in the literature on art; however, here, the painter's problems are related closely to the problems of meditation and prayer. The painter begins by forming the image in his "Idea," Ferrini writes, noting that "within himself he turned several times to the future undertaking . . . in his Idea finally he did all the work, then the cartoon . . . such that he could paint that which he had designed in his Idea."[140] When the painter is subsequently prevented from

136 Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.37.

137 "procedesse da suoi peccati, si risolse a confessarsi, & comunicarsi." Poccianti, *Vite de' sette*, 77.

138 "posti'in ordine tutti gli instromenti, sale il palco per dar fine a quella benedetta figura, ma nell'alzare il panno, che la tenea coperta (Oh cosa mirabile) trova che è finita." Ibid.

139 "mentre cantavano le lodi di Maria Vergine loro advocata . . . internamente sentano un vento, & aura soave, qual di tal sorte dentro gli muove, commuove, agita, occupa, & riempie di dolcezza." Ibid., 48.

140 "seco medesimo più volte à guisa di buon' Pittore la futura impresa rivolgedo . . . Nell'Idea sua finalmente compito il tutto, fatto il cartone, in ordine messi i pennelli . . . acciò dipingner' vi potesse, quanto havea nell'Idea sua disegnato." Ferrini, *Corona dei miracoli*, 2v.

completing the figure, it is not due to difficulties in execution, but rather problems afflicting him in his "Idea." When he sat down to paint the Madonna

> there came to his memory many and infinite designs, not knowing which among so many he would elect as correct and proportionate to so well disposed a figure, he consumed the whole day while thinking to himself. The following day he returned and sat down at the place already said and, if by a thousand designs he was confused the previous day, the following [day] he was defeated, or surpassed, by thousands [of images] . . . To the mind of the painter not one by one did they come but by the thousands they rained and, if it can be said, the designs flooded him . . . [141]

The painter eventually realized that the curious problem of the abundance of images was born from a malady of the soul: "his impediment was born of his sins."[142]

Difficulties encountered while visualizing sacred history and holy figures are commonly reported in spiritual literature. For example, in a meditation handbook the *Libretto d'imagini e di brevi meditationi*, following in the tradition of the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, the author Fra Luca Pinelli (1542–1607) describes a series of image-based meditations in which the votary imagines a particular moment in sacred history.[143] Pinelli writes that the votary is to "imagine [him- or herself] to be in some way present at the mystery [upon which they are] meditating, such that [they] seem to see and to hear those people that there [at that mystery] participated, discoursing with your intellect not only about their words and actions but also about that which piously the said persons could think."[144] Devout readers, therefore, were called upon, like painters, to envision the bodies of holy people as well as the invisible

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141 "Anzi venedogli à memoria molti, & infiniti disegni, non sappendo, quale fra tanti eleggerselo conveniente, e proporzionato à così ben disposta figura, seco pensando consumò tutto'l giorno. Il seguente dì ritornando & al luogo sedendo già dett; se con mille disegni restò confuso il sopradetto giorno, il seguente dalle migliaia restò vinto, e superato . . . nella mente del Pittore non ad uno, ad uno venisero, ma à migliaia piovessero, e se dir'posso diluviassero i disegni." Ibid., 3r.

142 "l'impedimento suo nasca da suoi paccati." Ibid.

143 Luca Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini, e di brevi meditationi sopra alcuni misterii della vita, e passione di Christo Signor nostro* (Venice, 1601). The edition consulted is Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, MAGL. 15.6.120 000/a. On the relationship between meditation and Renaissance art, see Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 48–51.

144 "imaginati essere in tal modo presente al misterio, che mediti, che ti paia di vedere, & udire tutte quelle persone, che vi intervengono, discorrendo col tuo intelleto non solo

thoughts that lay within them. In meditation as in art, problems visualizing sacred history could occur, including, for instance, the problem of not being able to visualize the image in question, as occurred to the painter in Poccianti's story. This problem can be perceived, for instance, in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, in which Christians are advised to be solitary while contemplating so that God will reveal Himself to them: "Flee from the public places . . . Do you not know that you have a modest Bridegroom, and that He never wishes to reveal His presence to you before everyone? Thus you must withdraw in the mind."[145] Pinelli also includes a brief section outlining the problems that may prevent successful meditation, revealing that it was also not uncommon for the soul to be afflicted with unwanted images whilst meditating:

> The second difficulty [in meditating] is to be combated by various and importunate thoughts whilst meditating, that come either for the work of a demon to be an impediment to the fruit of meditation, or because our nature is disordered by sin, [such that] the *imaginativa* goes against the will, wandering and entangling itself with various and impertinent thoughts . . . It is useful also in similar afflictions to converse with and ask God for help, confessing with humility that you cannot help yourself . . . [146]

The unwanted thoughts that plagued the painter of the Annunciation could be thought of as demons born from his sin: infirmities of the soul impeding his ability to meditate, to "see" the mystery. Thus, the "Iphigenia-type story" in Renaissance literature is used to demarcate the limits of painterly representation, whilst nonetheless charging the painter to push past these limits through piety.

Closely related to the mental disorder of an over-active, image-creating imagination, is the mental illness of melancholy. In the moralizing book the *Fior di virtù*, for example, melancholy is described as a kind of sadness born of

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intorno le loro parole, & attioni ma anco intorno quello, che piamente le dette persone potessero pensare." Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini . . . di Christo Signor Nostro*, 7.

145 See *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 119. The sermon quoted is by St. Bernard, 40 sermons on the Canticles (Migne, *PL* 183.0983).

146 "La seconda difficoltà è, l'esser nella Meditatione combattuto da varii, & importuni pensieri, ò vengano per opera del Demonio per impedirti il frutto della Meditatione, ò pur perche essendo la natura nostra disordinata per lo peccato, l'Imaginativa và contra volontà vagabonda intricandosi con varii, & impertinenti pensieri . . . Giova anco in simili travagli far alcuni colloquii con dimandar à Dio aiuto, confessando humilmente, che da te non puoi aiutarti." Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini . . . di Christo Signor Nostro*, 10.

"some imaginations [from which] man makes too many thoughts."[147] Similarly, in his *Trattato*, Romano Alberti assigns this illness to painters, writing that "many painters become melancholy because, wanting to imitate, they need to retain the phantasms fixed in their intellect," as a result of which "they keep their mind so abstracted and separated from matter that consequently melancholy comes to them."[148] It is likewise often repeated that melancholy was an illness that afflicted people given to contemplation and thus in Renaissance literature as well as modern scholarly literature on the Renaissance there is a special relationship between melancholy and artists.[149] The over-active, melancholic imagination appears also to have been caused by trying to articulate "impossibilities," that is, misguidedly seeking out the limits of representation. In Leonardo's manuscripts, for instance, he writes that he prepared his precepts for painters so that they would know "the true from the false," helping them to aim to create "things possible and with greater moderation," thus saving them from "desperation" and "melancholy."[150] In Vasari's *Vite*, Paolo Uccello was so overzealously preoccupied with perspective that he became "solitary, strange, melancholy, and poor," because he dedicated his "sophisticated and subtle *ingegno*" to "investigating the difficult and impossible things of perspective."[151] Similarly, the painter of the Annunciation who sought to paint the impossi-

147 "La tertia sie quando per alcuna imaginatione lhuomo fa tropo pensieri: questa si chiama malenconia." Gozzadini, *Fior di virtù*, 11r.

148 "vediamo che li pittori divengono malencolici, perché volendo loro imitare, bisogna che ritenghino li fantasmati fissi nell'intelletto . . . per il che talmente tengono la mente astratta e separata dalla materia, che conseguentemente ne vien la malencolia." Romano Alberti, *Trattato della nobilità della pittura*, in *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1962), 3: 209.

149 On Melancholy, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964); see particularly 73 and 82–85 for related themes discussed with respect to William of Auvergne and Constantinus Africanus, respectively. Melancholy is recognized as being potentially spiritually enlightening in the account given in Piers Britton, "Mio Malinchonico, o Vero . . . Mio Pazzo: Michelangelo, Vasari, and the Problem of Artists' Melancholy in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 34 (2003). See also Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 116–117.

150 Leonardo *Literary Works*, 1: 117, no. 12. "Queste regole son cagione di farti conosciere jl vero dal falso la qual cosa fa che li omini si promettano le cose possibili e con piv moderanza, e che tu non ti veli di ignoranza cosa tale che non avendo effetto tu abbi con disperatione a darti malinconia."

151 "diventa solitario, strano, malinconico e povero . . . dotato dalla natura d'uno ingegno sofistico, e sottile, non hebbe altro diletto che d'investigare alcune cose di prospettiva, difficili, & impossibili." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 268–69.

bly virtuous figure of the Virgin was perplexed with infinite thoughts and, in Vasari's eyes, Leonardo (as noted above) conjures up the image of a melancholic when he stays for hours in contemplation trying to imagine the impossible face of Christ.

Vasari's *vita* of another melancholic artist, Parmigianino, helps demonstrate why the mental illness befalls those who search for impossibilities, even though presumably pursuing spiritual mysteries was, as we have seen, encouraged. Parmigianino is described by Vasari as a second Raphael, yet his *vita* also shows similarities to Leonardo, particularly in the fact that he left a painting of the Virgin unfinished for not being very satisfied with it.[152] Eventually he begins leaving all work unfinished, searching not for the limits of representation, but for the limits of material properties by practicing the art of alchemy.[153] This eventually drains his gracious dignity, making him a savage-like man, dying in a "strange and melancholy" state.[154] The story points to the argument made more fully below that the limits of representation could be pursued for one's own sake (e.g.: Parmigianino's desire for wealth through alchemy) or for the sake of God (e.g.: Leonardo who searches to represent Christ). As such, searching to "unveil" sacred mysteries could lead, as it were, either to the revelation of a beautiful body, or to the display of shameworthy nudity; this precept is implied in two descriptions of the drunkenness of Noah that Vasari proffers in the lives of Paolo Uccello and Lorenzo Ghiberti. Uccello, as noted, is so concerned with "difficult and impossible things of perspective" that he fails to consider the wider purpose of his paintings and becomes melancholic; he is so focused on the limits of representation itself that he appears to forget the larger purpose of painting. Despite his fascination with perspective, in his painting of the drunkenness of Noah he unwittingly paints a cask incorrectly, which does not follow the same perspective lines as other objects in the painting, leading Vasari to wonder how "such an accurate and diligent [painter]

152 "alla chiesa di santa Maria de' Servi fece in una tavola la Nostra Donna col figliuolo in braccio, che dorme, e da un lato certi Angeli, uno de' quali ha in braccio un'urna di christallo, dentro la quale riluce una Croce contemplata dalla Nostra Donna; la quale opera, perche non se ne contentava molto, rimase imperfetta, ma nondimeno è cosa molto lodata in quella sua maniera piena di grazia, e di bellezza." Ibid., 2: 236.

153 "Intanto comincio Francesco à dismettere l'opera della Steccata, ò almeno a fare tanto adagio, che si conosceva, che v'andava di male gambe; e questo aveniva perche, havendo cominciato à studiare le cose dell'Alchimia, haveva tralasciato del tutto le cose della pittura, pensando di dover tosto aricchire congelando Mercurio." Ibid.

154 "essendo mal condotto, e fatto malinconico, e strano." Ibid.

made such a notable error."[155] In this ekphrasis there is a thematic similarity between the subject of the painting and Vasari's artistic criticism: like Noah whose drunkenness makes him, literally, into a naked sight for Ham to point out, Uccello's melancholic obsession accidentally causes him to err (at drawing the same object that led to Noah's inebriation), thereby inadvertently exposing his shameworthy naked (or misguided) ambition, which Vasari, like Ham, points out to the reader.[156] By contrast, Ghiberti's version of the same scene for the Baptistery doors is praised by Vasari for integrating the same error-inducing object flawlessly into the painting, showing "the casks and the vines . . . [such] that they do not impede the story, but rather are a beautiful ornament to it."[157] Vasari's words are so pointed that they suggest the two passages were originally intended to be compared by the reader, implying that improper preoccupations with technique may, in the end, only reveal the soul's corruption, rather than the desired unveiling of sacred mysteries.

If technique alone could not take the artist beyond the limits of representation, artists were encouraged to rely on simple humility and piety to supply what technique could not. This theme arises in a version of the Annuziata legend by Francesco Bocchi, in which more emphasis is placed on the virtue and humility of the painter himself.[158] Bocchi recounts how the commission was given to a man "of praiseworthy life and custom"; a "devout" painter who did

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155 "Fece quivi parimente in prospettiva una botte, che gira per ogni lato, cosa tenuta molto bella, & cosi una pergola piena d'uva, i cui legnami di piane squadrate vanno diminuendo al punto: ma ingannossi, perche il diminuire del piano di sotto, dove posano i piedi le figure va con le linee della pergola, e la botte non va con le medesime linee, che sfuggano. Onde mi sono maravigliato assai, che un tanto accurato, & diligente facesse un errore così notabile." Ibid., 1: 271.

156 Early doctors of the Christian church normally interpreted Noah's drunkenness as a warning of the dangers of drinking, or interpreted the scene allegorically as a prefiguration of Christ's Passion; see Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 177–178. Interpretations of the story in the later Middle Ages tended to focus on amplifying the literal level of meaning; see Brian Murdoch, "Noah: Navigator and Vintner," in *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003). Augustine interpreted Ham's conduct as illustrative of heretics of the Church, interpreting Noah as a type of Christ; see *De civitate Dei*, 16.2.

157 "oltre, che v'è, & la botte, & i pampani, & gli altri ordigni della vendemmia, fatti con avvertenza, & accomodati in certi luoghi, che non impediscono la storia, ma le fanno un'ornamento bellissimo." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 283.

158 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 267–268, discusses the purity of the artist.

not place "faith in his own force" but rather "turned to the help of God."[159] He began to work only after he had "confessed himself and had taken the holy sacrament."[160] Again, his humility is emphasized when he encounters problems with his painting, experiencing "grave thoughts and terror" regarding the task of "electing a face [formed by] divine custom . . . elected by God."[161] Unlike earlier versions of the story, Bocchi's painter did not suffer from a malady of the soul but still recognized his soul to be unequal to the task before him.

Comments on the painter's humility resemble hagiographical literature and recall biographies of the painter who rightly figures in hagiographical literature, the beatified painter Fra Angelico, one of several artists in Vasari's *Vite* whose saintliness is emphasized, as for examaple Barolsky has noted.[162] In a collection of lives of beatified and canonized Dominicans compiled by Serafino Razzi (1531–1611), the author writes that Fra Angelico "would never set himself to paint if first he had not kneeled down to make an oration, praying to God" and also that "when he had to paint the head of a Madonna . . . he would remain kneeling and as [the painting] came the first time, as such he would leave it without ever changing it."[163] Similar comments are found in Vasari's *vita* of Fra Angelico, though by reading the *vita* of Fra Angelico in the context of hagiographical literature, the importance of some passages is clarified. For example, in both Vasari and the much abbreviated *vita* written by Razzi, one reads that Fra Angelico refused food that was offered to him whilst painting in the Sistine Chapel; "given the labors that he was enduring" Pope Nicholas V wanted him to "restore himself by eating some meat," though the artist refused, not having "the license to do so from his Prior."[164] When the story is told by

159 "Per questo fu eletto un huomo di vita lodevole, & di costumi . . . era il pittore oltra ogni stima divoto . . . & poco fidandosi di sue forze, come savio, ricorreva all'aiuto di Dio." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 24.

160 "poscia che si fu confessato, & hebbe preso il santissimo sacramente . . . incominciò l'opera." Ibid., 26.

161 "conoscendosi molto minore de'suoi pensieri nell'arte sua, stava dubbioso . . . arrecassero grave pensiero, & terrore. Perche l'eleggere un volto di Costume divino che fosse dicevole ad una Vergine, che tra tutte di tutto 'l genere human era da Dio stat'eletta." Ibid., 27.

162 See Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose*, 54–58.

163 "non si farebbe mai posto à dipingere, che prima non si fusse inginocchiato à fare orazione . . . quando haveva à dipignere teste della madonna; ò Crocifissi, sempre stava in ginocchioni: e come gli venivano la prima volta fatte, cosi le lasciava, senza mai mutarle." Serafino Razzi, *Vite dei santi, e beati del sacro ordine de' frati predicatori* (Florence, 1588), 232.

164 "che volesse, attese le fatiche che durava alquanto ricrearsi col mangiare della carne; rispose non havere licenza di ciò fare dal suo priore." Ibid.

Vasari, it seems merely to inform us of Fra Angelico's dedication to maintaining his discipline, though in the context of other saint's lives, it alludes to the traditional motif of the saint who is blessed with visions after rejecting worldly items, food especially.

In the life of Catherine of Siena, reprinted in the same volume by Razzi, one reads that the Saint would not eat meat or drink wine but only had water and herbs.[165] The author attributes the visions of St. Catherine in large part to these sacrifices, writing that:

> the omnipotent God, with a certain singular reason sustained the body of this virgin [despite her lack of food]; likewise also her mind was restored with stupendous consolations of revelations. And from the abundance of the internal spiritual gifts, He re-gave to the body that supernatural force . . .[166]

Clearly, therefore, the rejection of food is counterbalanced with revelations. When we read, therefore, that Fra Angelico "did not ever retouch nor repair his paintings" because "in that way that they had come the first time" he "believed . . . was the will of God," it is to indicate that through his humility a virtue higher than human science is flowing through his work.[167] To be sure, his virtue was not as high as that of St. Catherine (Fra Angelico was only beatified, not a saint), but through the humility of his soul and the rejection of bodily pleasure, God was flowing through his work. Humility and the rejection of worldly pleasures were the only things that could cure the melancholy illness of the mind that searched for impossibility. As such, one reads in the treatise on painting by Paolo Pino that the painter must "avoid all the vices"; the good painter will eat "with sobriety and for sustenance, he detests the use

165 "il vino . . . in tutto lasciò . . . e cruda acqua tutto il restante della vita sua contentandosi. Le carni . . . ne i primi anni parimente lasciò . . . solamente di crude herbe pascendosi." Ibid., 55.

166 "Come l'onnipotente Dio con certa singolare ragione sostentava il corpo di questa vergine; cosi anco la mente di lei stupendente consolazioni di rivelazioni ricreava. E dalla abondanza de gl'interni doni spirituali, ridava nel corpo quella sopranatural forza, e vigore, che spesso mostrava." Ibid., 72.

167 "Haveva per costume non ritoccare, ne racconciare mai alcuna sua dipintura, ma lasciarle sempre in quel modo, che erano venute la prima volta; per credere (secondo, ch'egli diceva) che cosifusse la volonta di Dio." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 363.

of coitus without the morsel of reason, which is the part that debilitates the virile powers, mortifies the soul, causes melancholy and abbreviates life."[168]

Using technique as an armature accounts in part for the failure of Uccello, who did not allow God to flow naturally into his works. The theme is amplified in the life of another sometimes melancholic painter, Jacopo Pontormo. Repeatedly throughout his *vita* Pontormo is tempted to modify his paintings after they have reached a state of completion, experimenting with the styles of other artists instead of being satisfied with his given style.[169] A few exceptions to this tendency are framed by Vasari with tropes that recall the creation of miraculous images and, in fact, one such painting was created for the Servites at the Santissima Annunziata: having completed a particular commission, Pontormo resolves to improve the painting by starting it again from scratch, though he is thwarted by Andrea del Sarto who unveils the painting to an awed public before Pontormo has the chance to carry out his plan.[170] The premature unveiling of the painting here repeats the original unveiling of the Annunziata painting, although in Pontormo's case it is his unaltered work that inspires awe. This suggests that each "authentic" mark left by an artist is to some extent a miraculous revelation; at least in Pontormo's case it is better to let his natural talent flow through him rather than to infinitely rework his paintings in order to imitate the styles of other artists. This meaning becomes obvious when Vasari praises two paintings by Pontormo that retain his natural style, each of which includes the figure of Veronica and the impression of Christ on the veil. The first of these Pontormo "made in such restrictions of time" that he resisted reworking it, for which reason it "was much praised";[171] the other painting shows "Veronica giving [Christ] the *sudario*," which was much better

168 "sopra il tutto aborrisca il pittore tutti li vizii . . . ma si cibi sobriamente per sostentazion propria; schiffasi d'usar il coito senza il morso della ragione, qual è parte che debilita le potenzie virili, avilisce l'animo, causa melancolia, e abbrevia la vita." Pino, *Dialogo*, 1: 136–137.

169 The issue of imitation in the *vita* of Pontormo has been discussed by Sharon Gregory, "The Unsympathetic Exemplar in Vasari's Life of Pontormo," *Renaissance Studies* 23 (2009).

170 "e la sera medesima, essendo uscito Iacopo di casa per andare ai Servi, e come fusse notte mandar giu il lavoro che aveva fatto, e mettere in opera il nuovo disegno, trovò levato i ponti e scoperto ogni cosa con infiniti popoli attorno che guardavano." Vasari, *Vite*, 3: 476.

171 "La onde mettendo mano Iacopo all'opera vi fece un Dio Padre con molti putti, & una Veronica, che nel Sudario haveva l'effigie di Giesu Christo; la quale opera, da Iacopo fatta in tanta strettezza di tempo, gli fu molto lodata." Ibid., 3: 480.

FIGURE 15 *Jacopo Pontormo,* Scenes from the Passion of Christ: The Ascent to Calvary (*1523–26*). *Certosa del Galluzzo, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: ALINARI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

than other portions of the same work, having realized "the damage study of the German style had done to his sweet manner" (Figure 15).[172]

172 "mentre Veronica gli porge il sudario accompagnata da alcune femine vecchie, e giovani, piangenti lo strazio che far veggiono del Salvatore. Questa storia, ò fusse perche ne fusse avertito dagl'amici, ò vero che pure una volta si accorgesse Iacopo, benche tardi, del danno, che alla sua dolce maniera havea fatto lo studio della Tedesca; riusci molto migliore che l'altre fatte nel medesimo luogo." Ibid., 3: 485.

The motif of Veronica's veil, and the re-enactment of the unveiling of the Annunziata painting, both serve to show how the artist must, like Fra Angelico, allow his or her natural talent or style to emerge in his or her works since this natural style is as close to God as one can get. This is not to say that learning technique is irrelevant; however, technical skill must support, not obliterate, whatever gifts God breathes into the artist's soul. When Pontormo allows his style to come forth it leaves the indelible impression of his soul, much like Christ left his impression on Veronica's veil.

In this way, paintings are much like relics of the artist, or better, skins that have unpeeled from the artist. Vasari suggests the comparison between art and relic again in his *vita* of Leonardo, in a passage describing the artist's anatomical drawings and his unpeelings of real human bodies, which showed "all the bone structure, adding to these in order all the nerves covered with muscles."[173] Vasari then notes that these papers are kept by Francesco Melzi who preserves them "as relics of Leonardo," illustrating how the desiccated bodies of saints have been replaced by drawings that likewise seek out the interior of the body.[174] With this wording, Vasari subtly hints that paintings of bodies are, in a sense, extensions of the painter's body. Michelangelo might be alluding to a similar point, though making his argument in paint rather than words, when he depicts a flayed skin of St. Bartholomew in his *Last Judgment*, commonly believed to be a self-portrait.[175]

Renaissance literature on art, therefore, cautioned against the overzealous acquisition of technical expertise, assuming that the goal of sacred painting could not be reached without the support of some interior faculty that exceeded human explanation. This interior faculty may perhaps be understood as the rational faculty that leaned upon the ideas of God to which man

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173 "dove egli fece tutte le ossature & a quelle congiunse poi con ordine tutti i nervi, & coperse di muscoli i primi appiccati all'osso, et i secondi, che tengono il fermo, & i terzi, che muovano." Ibid., 2: 7.

174 "che le ha care, & tiene, come per reliquie tal carte." Ibid.

175 The intended meaning of Michelangelo's flayed skin is widely debated, as surveyed by Leo Steinberg, "The Line of Fate in Michelangelo's Paintings," in *The Language of Images*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Campbell, " 'Fare una Cosa Morta Parer Viva,' " 611–614, has interpreted the skin as an evokation of, or substitute for the *sudarium*, seeing it as an indication of the "nondivine" authority of the work of art. Other interpretations to the contrary suggest that the skin be viewed as a testament to piety of the artist; see Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chapter 7. The manifold meanings of Michelangelo's gesture of course go beyond the scope of my discussion, but its presence does suggest that Michelangelo in some way viewed his artistic work as the offering of his skin.

had imperfect access through his piety. In Bocchi's version of the miraculous image story, the painter is humble and virtuous for which he is graced with the miraculous painting. The miracle was prepared for, though not guaranteed, by his virtue since it is only by the grace of God that such a miracle is possible. The motif of sleep emphasizes the distance between the painter's desire and the grace of God: in Ferrini and Bocchi, after taking the sacrament, the painter is overcome by sleep after which, upon waking, he finds the painting finished.[176] Visions that come during sleep are a common motif in hagiographical literature, and indeed Ferrini wrote that the seven founders of the *Servi* had visions in sleep following their prayers, again emphasizing that anything bearing upon spiritual efficacy depends on the complicity of God.[177]

The material above highlights a conflict between the need for the artist to perfect his craft and the need to allow one's own individual style to emerge naturally in one's art. This tension is more generally evident in Vasari's narrative of Renaissance art, which describes the progressive perfection of painting.[178] However, it has long been noted that individual descriptions of paintings within the biographies—in which early artists are lauded with the same terms as later artists—suggest that in a sense the perfection of painting had been achieved as early as Giotto.[179] As such, the effectiveness of images does not increase over time, just the perfection of the science of painting. Early painters, such as Fra Angelico, had been able to paint seemingly divine figures, even if they had not possessed the science of later artists. To explain the apparently paradoxical relationship between piety and technique, we might look more broadly at the general tension between study and piety that exists in the Christian tradition of the liberal arts. Whilst in Augustine's writings the ultimate goal of the liberal arts is to move the soul towards God through science, it is also true that it was not necessary to be educated in order for the soul to

176 "doppo un' profondo, ed'assai lungo sonno . . . trovò nella stessa calcina, e nello stesso muro fatto il detto Viso divinamente." Ferrini, *Corona di miracoli*, 3b.

177 "sopraffatti da dolce et soave sonno si gli presenta in visione la B. Vergine da infinita moltitudine d'Angioli accompagnata." Poccianti, *Vite de Sette*, 71.

178 See Ernst H. Gombrich, "The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress and its Consequences," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the art of the Renaissance*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

179 See Svetlana L. Alpers, "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Instituttes* 23 (1960), 191–192. Alpers writes that there are two aspects of art in Vasari. The imitation of nature improves over time whereas narration is the constant end of art.

move towards God.[180] It seems highly likely that this seemingly paradoxical situation in art theory is the result of a Christian philosophy in which perfection was believed to be closeness to God, and to which there were two distinct paths: study and piety. Study could perfect the science of man, and give him greater understanding of God's works and hence move him closer to God (as described in chapters one and two); however, with the piety of the soul God could be embraced without science; Fra Angelico's perfection appears to have flowed from his soul, not his science.

The two paths are contrasted by Bocchi in his discussion of the miracle working image of the Annunciation. He notes that, despite being painted in an early artistic style, the Annunciation still exceeded the work of later artists because it had been made by God's hand. This passage is worth quoting in full because it reveals how the scientific progress of art could be compared unfavorably to "primitive" painting, shedding light upon arguments that would be made centuries later in favor of "primitive" arts over refined technique.[181] However, it is not because it is so forward-looking that this passage is interesting. Rather, it articulates beliefs shared by other writers of the time: that the virtue of any work of art flowed directly from the virtue of the soul of the artist, regardless of technique. Bocchi begins his statement by describing the style of art at the time the Annunziata image was painted:

> because at the time that it was painted [the miraculous Annunciation at SS. Annunziata] the method of managing colors had been lost, in Italy as in other countries, there was no one who painted with reason, but rather artists effigized that which they wished to imitate with a rough manner and with little sense. For a person who is little practiced in painting, to express the *costume* [the custom of a person] and the thoughts [of a person], which are [evident] in the face with nobility, is held to be a thing difficult above all else. But for man to make a [face that is] superhuman rather divine, as is known in the *Santissima Nunziata*, is so beyond

180 This can be perceived in the writings of Augustine, for example in *De doctrina Christiana*, 1.39.43, where he writes that Scriptures are not necessary to be a good Christian, but rather only Faith, Hope and Charity. On this tension in monastic study of the liberal arts, see also Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 22.

181 On primitive painting in the Renaissance and concerns regarding religious reform, see Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*. Further, on the relationship between religious piety and primitivism see Ernst H. Gombrich, "The Debate on Primitivism in Ancient Rhetoric," *Journal of the Warbrug and Courtauld Institutes* 29 (1966); also see Gombrich, "Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress," 1.

> every belief that it must truly be reputed to be impossible. Nor can it be believed that [Michelangelo] Buonarroti, or Andrea del Sarto, or Raphael of Urbino of all the painters most noble and sovereign, have arrived to this mark. Because no matter how much in their pictures nothing pertinent to the best painter is lacking and [their paintings] compete in a certain way with nature, however this divine excellence about which we are speaking is victorious over every thought: and the other works are lauded as human things, but to this sublime honor and to this majesty they do not in any way arrive. In a century, therefore, rough, inasmuch as every artifice of painting was obscure, this work was made so highly and the face of the miraculous *Nunziata* [was made] with so much virtue that afterwards, it can certainly be affirmed that to this the best and most perfect artists—now that art has come to its peak—will [still] not arrive to [the same heights as] this work not of human sense but proceeding from the divine.[182]

Therefore, the quality of the artist's soul determined her or his ability to paint that which was above vision. A painting by God Himself, such as the miraculous painting of the Annunciation, though painted without science, could not be bettered. Even a painter who was better at painting the anatomy of the face would not be able to paint the face of the Virgin so well because to paint the soul was to indicate something that was greater than the sum of its parts.

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182 "Perche nel tempo, che fu dipinta, perduto il modo di maneggiare ottimamente i colori, non havea nell'Italia, ne in altri paesi altresì chi dipignesse con ragione: ma da gli artefici con maniere roze, & con poco senno era effigiato quello, che volevano imitare. L'esprimere il Costume, & il pensiero, che è nel volto nobilmente, da chi è poco usato nella pittura, è tenuta cosa sopra tutte malagevole: ma da huomo il far quello sopra humano, anzi divino, come nella Santissima Nunziata si conosce, è tanto fuori di ogni credenza, che come impossibile di vero si dee riputare. Ne si faccia in questo alcuno à credere, che il Buonarroto, o Andrea del Sarto, o Raffaello da urbino di tutti i pittori piu nobili, & piu sovrani, siano arrivati à questo segno. Peroche quntunque nelle loro pitture non manchi alcuna cosa, che sia al migliore artifizio pertinent, & gareggi in un certo modo con la natura, vince tuttavia ogni pensiero questa divina eccellenza, di cui si favella: & bensono lodate le altre opere, come cosa humana, ma à questo sublime honore, & à questa maestà non arrivano in modo alcuno. In un secolo adunque rozo, quando era all'oscuro ogni artifizio della pittura, fu fatta questa opera cosi altamente, & fu con tanta virtù effigiato il volto nella miracolosa Nunziata, che poscia che à questo i piu perfetti artifizzi, & migliori, quando è l'arte hormai venuta in colmo, non arrivano, bene di certo si puote affermare, come à opera questa non da senno humano, ma divino procedente." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 24–25. I discuss and offer a slightly different interpretation of this passage in "Artistic Devotion."

It appears to follow from this logic that painters were continuously advised to pray before executing their works and, more generally, to be good people.[183] The author of the early handbook on the painter's craft, Cennino Cennini (14th to early 15th century), recommends that the painter's "life should always be ordered as if [he] were studying theology, philosophy or other sciences, that is by eating and drinking temperately."[184] Around the same time, Leon Battista Alberti notes that "it would please [him] that the painter . . . be a good man . . . everyone knows how much more the goodness of man is valued above every industry and art."[185] Romano Alberti confirms these sentiments over a century later more explicitly by writing that Christian painting is "beneficial to the painters themselves . . . seeing as God must be adored by each and everyone not only with an exterior worship but also interiorly."[186] To paint sacred images was thus a form of interior devotion. Therefore, paintings

> as things of exterior worship, declare to God the painter's interior, like an offering or a kind of sacrifice. Christian painting is also beneficial to painters as it incites them to be spiritual to express devout affections, which if they do not feel in themselves, they cannot produce them easily. Moreover, how can they unite others with God if they are disunited from him?[187]

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183 This is not to deny that the literature on art, particularly Vasari, made some artists famous for being bad, such as Andrea del Castagno and Fra Fillippo Lippi. On the goodness of painters, see, for example, Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 347–351.

184 "La tua vita vuole essere sempre ordinata siccome avessi a studiare in teologia, o filosofia, o altre scienze, cioè del mangiare e del bere temperatamente." Cennini, *Il libro dell'arte*, chapter 29.

185 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.52. "Nam nemo nescit quantum probitas vel magis quam omnis industriae aut artis admiratio valeat ad benivolentiam civium comparandam." "la bontà dell'uomo molto più vaglia che ogni industria o arte ad acquistarsi bnivolenza da' cittadini, e niuno dubita la benivolenza di molti molto all'artefice giovare a lode insieme e al guadagno." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.52.

186 "Che la pittura cristiana poi riguardi e giovi alli stessi pittori (sì come dice un autore), dovendo il sommo Dio esser adorato da ciascheduno non solo con il culto esteriore, ma interiore ancora." Alberti, *Trattato della nobiltà della pittura*, 3: 231.

187 "vengono le pitture, come cose del culto esteriore, a protestar l'interior delli pittori a Iddio, come oblazioni e specie di sacrificio. Giova ancora alli pittori la pittura cristiana, incitandoli a dover esser spirituali per esprimere li affetti devoti, i quali se non sentono in lor stessi, non possono produrli facilmente. E di più, come potranno unir li altri con Dio se essi da quello seran disuniti?" Ibid.

With these words, Romano Alberti unites the painter's task with the preacher's, since it was well established that preachers needed to be pious in order to speak effectively, a point that was made, for example, by Humbert of Romans and then repeated in the sixteenth century by Erasmus.[188] Relationships between preaching and painting are discussed in more depth in the following chapter, but it is worth noting here how the persuasive effect of listening to a live person can be substituted by an inanimate art object if the work of art was made by a worker experiencing pious emotions. Hence, the unknowable interior space of the artist is transferred to the art object. In making such a claim, Romano Alberti hence repeats Dante's maxim discussed above, though the source with which he was most consciously working was probably the *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* by Cardinal Gabriel Paleotti.[189] Paleotti, unlike many art theorists, explicitly discusses the soul of the painting, writing that "the end of a painting will be to resemble the thing represented, which some call the soul of the painting, because all the other things, such as beauty, the variety of colors, and the other ornaments, are accessories to this."[190] Though this passage may make it sound as though what Paleotti calls the "soul" of the painting is "the subject" of the painting, he may have intended something more profound than this. He follows this passage by describing in more detail what the "ends" of the painter are, writing that the painter "by means of his work and his art aims to acquire divine grace because a Christian, born to sublime things . . . lifts his eyes high . . . [to] eternal things."[191] Thus, the soul of the painting to which the painter aimed was nothing other than divinity.

If, therefore, the soul was visible through the face of a person, the visualization of certain faces presented the problem of being impossible to visualize, since their souls had a perfection beyond human comprehension. The beauty seen in certain painted faces was therefore a testament to the virtue of the

188 John W. O'Malley, "Erasmus and the History of Sacred Rhetoric: The Ecclesiastes of 1535," in *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century: Preaching, Rhetoric, Spirituality and Reform* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1993), 14.

189 In her edition of Alberti's *Trattato della nobiltà della pittura*, Barocchi identifies the source as Paleotti, 3: 231.

190 "Il fine della pittura serà l'assomigliare la cosa rappresentata, che alcuni chiamano l'anima della pittura, perché tutte l'altre cose, come la vaghezza, varietà de'colori et altri ornamenti, sono accessorie ad essa." Gabriel Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*, in *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, ed. Paola Barocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1961), 2: 210.

191 "Il fine principale serà, col mezzo della fatica et arte sua acquistarsi la grazia divina; imperoché il cristiano, nato a cose sublimi . . . levando gli occhi in alto . . . nelle cose eterne." Ibid., 210–211.

artist, pointing not only to the soul of the represented holy person, but also imbuing the object itself with *virtus*. The painted face became thus a veil that could reveal the virtue of the artist as much as the interior thoughts of the figured person. Although one may object that the history of art has demonstrated how art objects were increasingly viewed rationally, that is, as the product of skilled craftsmen not possessing the intentionality that other living beings possess, the passages discussed here demonstrate that the literature on art was still saturated with stories and metaphors observing the interior spiritual properties of works of art. The tension between technical and spiritual descriptions of art points to the larger tension between piety and study in Christian thought.

Part Two

The Impossibility of Picturing Virtue: The Face as a Natural Sign

In part one of this chapter, writings about the face of Christ and of the saints made evident that there was a long cultural tradition of perceiving virtue on the face.[192] It was problematic to claim that virtue was so perceptible, however, because virtue was an abstract ideal, according to the Platonic terms central to the Christian faith, and therefore could not be materially visible. This section extends the discussion from part one about artists' imaginings of the souls of holy people by focusing on how Renaissance writers negotiated the problem of virtue being visible on the face, and discusses particularly how the faces of virtuous people became "natural signs" of their virtue.[193] The perception of passion and virtue on the face has been discussed in some recent scholarly work;[194] this section revists these discussions to show how the question of virtue's visibility was related to spiritual desires. I continue to explore the "interior" qualities of images in the writings of authors such as Gabriel Paleotti and

192 Petrarch also discusses a portrait by Simone Martini of his muse, Laura, in terms that evoke the virtue of her soul. See Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, 97–98.

193 David Summers in *The Judgment of Sense*, chapter 7, has also looked at natural signs, connecting this concept to the moral purpose of images. While I fundamentally agree with Summers' treatment, my own discussion aims to further unpack this relationship.

194 In his discussion of Paleotti, passion and virtue, Holger Steinemann explores some similar sources, see *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung: Kardinal Gabriel Paleottis "Discroso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane" (1582)* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2006), 195–251.

Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, concluding with a discussion of Bocchi's meditations on the virtues seen on the face.

The term "natural sign," sometimes still used in contemporary semiotic literature, is here derived from Augustinian semiotics, where it used to denote a category of signs now frequently described as "indexes."[195] For Augustine, natural signs were those that "without a wish or any urge to signify, cause something else besides themselves to be known from them": the footprint was a natural sign of the foot; smoke was a natural sign of fire.[196] Likewise, Augustine wrote that "the expression of an angry or depressed person signifies an emotional state even if there is no such wish" to signify those moods or emotions.[197] When Alberti wrote, therefore, that "the feelings are known from the movements of the body," he was referring to what Augustine would have called a natural sign.[198] That to which both Augustine and Alberti refer are passing movements of the soul (*motus animi*/*movimenti d'animo*), whereas in much Renaissance literature on art, authors suggest that the face conveys the very virtue, and not just a fleeting passion, of the soul; this assumption, for instance, lies at the root of the stories about the difficulty of painting Christ's face.

Writers on art who suggest that faces reveal the soul's virtue should not be confused with physiognomists, though there are clearly areas of overlap and the differences between them cannot always be drawn too sharply. Renaissance physiognomists proposed that the outward appearance of a per-

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195 See Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, book 2. On the index in modern semiotics, see Charles Sanders Peirce, "Sign," in *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic*, ed. James Hoops (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 239: "An *index* is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant. Such, for instance, is a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as a sign of a shot."

196 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 2.2.2. "Naturalia sunt, quae sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi, praeter se aliquid aliud ex se cognosci faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0036).

197 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 2.2.2 "et vultus irati seu tristis affectionem animi significat, etiam nulla ejus voluntate qui aut iratus aut tristis est; aut si quis alius motus animi vultu indice proditur, etiam nobis non id agentibus ut prodatur." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0036).

198 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.41. "Sed hi motus animi ex motibus corporis cognoscuntur." "Ma questi movimenti d'animo si conoscono dai movimenti del corpo." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.41.

son's face or body could be used as a map to specific qualities of their soul. Physiognomy thus assesses the quality of a man's soul from his physical characteristics, decoding signs on the body to infer character.[199] Physiognomy was implicated in a range of philosophical beliefs about the nature of the soul, and, for instance, as Martin Porter discusses, physiognomy was described variously as a science that could assess mental character in the present or in the future.[200] It is fitting to consider physiognomy and art theory, as for instance Holger Steinemann has in his study of Gabriel Paleotti, since authors of both kinds of literature share an interest in the appearance of faces and a concern for what can be known through sight.[201] Taking only one Early Modern Italian example of this (pseudo-)Aristotelian science, we see how physiognomy might not reveal the extent to which a person has used his or her free will to shape the soul according to virtue, but rather might only be concerned for the soul's predisposition toward virtue or vice. This is true of Giovanni Battista Della Porta's (1535–1615) influential book *De humana physiognomimia*.[202] In the *proemio*, Della Porta explains that readers can use physiognomic science to observe their own face, to identify the inclinations of their own soul and then to correct their behavior before faltering. He writes that there are "some who look at themselves in a mirror, and seeing themselves to have been well formed by nature [according to the science of physiognomy], procure for [what is] forthcoming so that [they do] not mark the beauty of the body with the ugliness of

199 See Martin Porter, *'Windows of the Soul': Physiognomy in European Culture, 1470–1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 52–53. Porter frequently discusses the signs of the body as a "natural language" (e.g., see 8–9, referring to Richard Saunders). This should not be confused with the Augustinian term above because by Augustine's definition no natural sign would need to be decoded. On physiognomy, see also Martin Kemp, *The Human Animal in Western Art and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), particularly chapter 1.

200 See Porter, *'Windows of the Soul'*, 52–53, 56–57. The art of reading gestures also sought to decode the affections of the soul, rather than its inclinations, at any given moment. See the discussion of Giovanni Bonifacio in Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, trans. Jeremy Parzen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 160.

201 See Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 195–211, who also discusses texts by Giovanni Battista Della Porta and Cesare Ripa, which I revist below.

202 Giovanni Battista Della Porta, *De humana physiognomonia* (Vico Equense, 1586); the book was published in Italian as *Della fisonomia dell'huomo* (Naples, 1598).

custom."[203] Physiognomy may decode the tendencies of the soul but it cannot speak about the virtue practiced by the soul. In a later section, Della Porta further presses the distinction between the inclination and the actual virtue of the soul. He recounts the story of a portrait seen by a physiognomist, who "having at once seen it and considered it minutely, part by part, said that it was [the face of someone] lustful, dishonest and deceitful."[204] When the person depicted in the portrait heard this he confessed that it was a

> great truth and that there were in him these vices but with the force of Philosophy all of these lascivious and dishonest thoughts had been expelled from his chest and that he had done with effort that which would not have followed from his nature.[205]

Della Porta's science of physiognomy, therefore, is unable to know the actual virtue of a person, and can only account for the soul's tendencies. Whatever one's inclinations, one may elect by free will to cling to the form of virtue and thereby strive against natural tendencies, making it impossible for physiognomists to determine the virtue of a soul by looking at the face. It may be that these passages of Della Porta's text were composed to assuage censors, since without these disclaimers, it might appear that physiognomy contradicted belief in the free will: the Catholic Church, following the philosophy of Aristotle, posited that virtue was a matter of choice.[206] Therefore, whatever Della Porta's personal beliefs, physiognomy does not explain how the face seems to reveal the soul's virtue, as writers on art contend, since it cannot account for the work of the free will.

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203 "Conciosia che mirandosi alcuni in uno specchio, & vedendo esser ben formato dalla natura, procuri per l'avenire, che non imbratti la bellezza del corpo con la bruttezza di costumi." Della Porta, *Della fisonomia*, proemio.

204 "consideratolo minutissimamente parte à parte, disse ch'era lussorioso, dishonesto, & ingannevole." Ibid., proemio.

205 "confessò Filemone essere grandissimo Fisonomo, & haver di lui detto gran verità, e ch'erano in lui quei vitij, ma con lo sforzo della Filosofia haver scacciato dal suo petto tutti quei lascivi, e dishonesti pensieri, & haver fatto quel con lo sforzo, che non havea potuto conseguire dalla sua natura." Ibid., proemio.

206 See Louise George Clubb, *Giambattista Della Porta Dramatist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 25–26. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* [*Nicomachean Ethics*], trans. W.D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), ii, 1; 1103a33–34.

The problem posed to Christian philosophy by the science of physiognomy can be perceived in the writings of Augustine who is sometimes credited with the very invention of free will.[207] If one believes that the soul cannot control the shape of the body according to its free will, to measure virtue by the shape of the body would clearly contradict the Christian belief in free will. In *De Trinitate*, for example, Augustine denies the idea that the body's form can be an index to the soul's virtue, asking himself whether or not there can be such a thing as a body that appears to show "justice."[208] Denying this possibility, he writes that "justice is a certain beauty of the soul through which men are beautiful even though the body of very many is misshapen and deformed."[209] Augustine did, however, believe that it was possible for virtue to become visible in the material world when virtuous people showed their virtue through their actions: St. Paul, he postulates, is loved, for example, because "while he lived on earth, [he] harmonized with, and corresponded to this form [of virtue]."[210] St. Paul held fast to the form of virtue, and therefore virtue could be seen in his actions. The tension arising from the close relationship between the abstraction of virtue and the concreteness of virtuous action is reflected, I argue, in Renaissance writings on art, which appear to posit that virtuous actions can impress themselves onto the face, in effect contradicting Augustine's original proposition. In passages examined below, the soul appears to form the face according to its virtue; the free will shapes the physiognomy or natural structure of the face according to how closely it has conformed to virtue. Seeing virtue on the face, as such, was not a matter of finding a code by which the natural inclinations of the soul could be gauged on the face (as in physiognomy); rather, the soul made its virtue known naturally by molding the face: like a natural sign, virtue could print itself on the face in the same way that a foot could leave a footprint on the ground.

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207 See, for example, Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), chapter 6.

208 See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 8.6.9.

209 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 8.6.9. "At oculis non vidit nisi corpora. Justus autem in homine non est, nisi animus: et cum homo justus dicitur, ex animo dicitur, non ex corpore. Est enim quaedam pulchritudo animi justitia, qua pulchri sunt homines, plerique etiam qui corpore distorti atque deformes sunt." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.0954).

210 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 8.9.13. "Quid est quod accendimur in dilectionem Pauli apostoli, cum ista legimus, nisi quod credimus eum ita vixisse?" "Et nisi hanc formam, quam sempre stabilem atque incommutabilem cernimus, praecipue diligeremus, non idea diligermus illum, quia ejus vita, cum in carne viveret, huic formae coaptatam et congruentem fuisse, fide retinemus." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.0959).

The desire to see virtue was a recurring theme in spiritual literature, emerging from the necessary tension between the visible reality of sacred history and the invisibility of divinity. For instance, the fourteenth-century meditation treatise *La vita Cristiana* by Simone Fidati da Cascia begins by exhorting the reader to imagine the life of Christ, though when he later instructs meditators to consider the apostles, martyrs and Christian virgins, he muses that "with the hand it cannot be written, nor seen, that virtue that was in them."[211] Simone Fidati da Cascia, hence, points to the unknowability of the interior mind, and thereby demonstrates how image-based meditation struggles to know incorporeal virtue through material history.

Strategies for representing virtue did exist, though they did not utilize natural signs, but rather what Augustine called "given signs": signs that were culturally given to indicate a particular idea or thing (language, for instance, was made up of signs that had been "given" to indicate certain things). In lieu of the faces of holy people, meditators were also encouraged to imagine virtue through images constructed of given signs—what might now be also called mnemonic or allegorical images. For example, in the *Libretto d'imagini e brevi meditationi sopra li sette peccati capitali, e le virtù à loro contrarie* (Book of images and brief meditations on the seven capital sins, and the virtues that are contrary to them), a meditation handbook written by Luca Pinelli comprised of meditations on the virtues and vices, each meditation includes an actual illustration of the virtue or vice in question. These are what could be called allegorical images: for example, the prologue to Pinelli's meditations on the virtues is prefaced by a picture depicting a virtuous soul being handed by the virtues, one by one, to angels in the sky, representing "the felicitous exit of the virtuous. It represents also the effect of Virtue . . ."[212] Though virtue is something that cannot be seen (Pinelli writes that "the virtuous are not of this world," denoting both that virtue is a concept that can never be completely realized on earth, and also that people who are virtuous belong to heaven), these images and the accompanying meditations help one keep one's thoughts

211 "Imagina e pensa bene, anima, la vita di Cristo, incominciando dalla incarnazione; e non ci lasciare uno piccolino atto di quello che ti possono ricordare;" Simone Fidati da Cascia, *La vita Cristiana*, 619. "ché con la mano non si puote scrivere, né vedere qual virtú era in costoro." Ibid., 612.

212 "Questa imagine . . . rappresenta il felice esito del virtuoso. Rappresenta ancora l'efftto delle Virtù che è accompagnare l'anima del virtuoso, passando di questa vita, e con giubilo consegnarla à gli Angeli . . ." Luca Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini e di brevi meditationi sopra li sette peccati capitali, e le virtù à loro contrarie* (Naples, 1600), 35.

close to virtue.[213] The image of the virtue of chastity includes, amongst other things, a female personification of chastity (with her identification written beside her), enthroned in the sky, with a unicorn at her side; beneath her on earth a finely dressed gentleman is tempted by a devil who pulls him toward a fashionably dressed woman holding a fan (a courtesan?), whilst an angel on his other side exhorts him toward the seated figure of chastity above (Figure 16).

Such representations are more explicit in their evocation of vice rather than virtue, and indeed this scene is reminiscent of the images of the virtues and vices that were found on Gothic cathedrals.[214] In his recommendations on how to stay chaste, Pinelli likewise advises using images in the mind, writing that as soon as "temptation comes, use some remedy, such as making the cross to the heart, thinking of death, or of Christ crucified."[215] Thus, the desire to see virtue arises in image-based devotional practices, though being unable to know what virtue looked like, meditators are limited to constructing allegorical representations of virtue, or are recommended to think of Christ's example.

The spiritual impulse to picture virtue appears also in the literature on art, in which it is framed as a similarly frustrating task for the artist. An example of the difficulty of imagining virtue appears in the *Trattato di architettura* by Filarete (also known as Antonio di Pietro Averlino; c. 1400–c. 1469), from c. 1461–4. In a passage concerning painted decorations, Filarete writes that he has "often wondered how virtue and vice could be depicted."[216] Considering some earlier, allegorical depictions of virtue, he states that once he had finally "understood all these symbols" he was not satisfied with them, and so set himself "to thinking and devising with [his] own intelligence" an image of virtue.[217]

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213 "Simile à questo scrive San Giustino Filosofo, e Martire nella questione 124. Si come dice egli i Virtuosi non sono di questo mondo, cosí la glori, e premio loro non è posto nelle cose terrene di questa vita, perche non vi è cosa nel mondo, che sia degno premio della virtù." Ibid., 35.

214 See for example, Émile Mâle, *Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (1913; repr., Mineola: Dover Publications, 2000), 116–117.

215 "Subito, che viene la tentatione, usare qualche rimedio, come farsi la croce al cuore, pensare alla morte, ò à Christo croficisso." Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini . . . sopra li sette peccati*, 51.

216 Filarete, *Filarete's Treatise on Architecture. Being the Treatise by Antonio di Piero Averlino, Known as Filarete*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 1: 246. "Sì che, immaginando io più volte a che cose si potesse asomigliare questa virtù." Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, trans. and ed. Anna Maria Finoli, and Liliana Grassi (Milan: Il Polifilio, 1972), 2: 532. (book 18, f. 142v.).

217 Filarete, *Treatise on Architecture*, 1: 246. "vedute tutte queste similitudini e intese, non nella mente mi sodisfaceva, in modo che collo 'ngegno mi missi a fantasticare e pensare." Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, 2: 533 (book 18, f. 143r.).

FIGURE 16 *Anonymous Artist,* Meditatione della castita. *In* Libretto d'imagini e di brevi meditationi sopra li sette peccati capitali, e le virtù à loro contrarie, *by Luca Pinelli, 51. Naples, 1600.*
DIGITAL IMAGE COURTESY OF THE GETTY'S OPEN CONTENT PROGRAM.

He finally comes to the conclusion that virtue "could be represented in a single figure: . . . [it would be] an armed figure. His head would be like the sun," and would include various other attributes, such as a date tree and a laurel, each of which in some way pertains to virtue.[218] Though his goals are clearly stated in a secular context, Filarete has a difficulty similar to that which faced Simone Fidati da Cascia: in both cases there is a sincere desire to grasp virtue visually though the so-called allegorical strategies for its representation can be dissatisfying.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Cesare Ripa (died 1622) dedicated an entire book to representing the virtues, adopting means similar to Filarete

218 Filarete, *Treatise on Architecture*, 1: 246. "in una sola figura si rapresentasse essa Virtù, in questa forma mi venne a mente di fare una figura a modo d'uno il quale fusse armato, e la sua testa era a similitudine del sole." Filarete, *Trattato di architettura*, 2: 533 (book 18, f. 143r.).

in his *Iconologia*, a book claiming to be "no less useful than necessary to poets, painters and sculptors for representing the virtues, vices and affections and human passions."[219] Acknowledging the difficulty of picturing virtue, Ripa writes that he will treat of "images that [were] made to signify a thing that is different than that which is seen by the eye," by which allegorical subjects may be understood.[220] The first images to represent things in this way, Ripa asserts, were the images of gods in the classical tradition, "the great multitude of fables of the antique writers," which were nothing "other than veils or vestments to keep covered that part of Philosophy, that regards the generation and corruption of natural things."[221] The veil metaphor here indicates that these images were in some way coded, unlike natural signs.[222] Ripa's images are famously much more complex than, say, Pinelli's simplified personifications of virtue, as though through accumulative detail he might convey the form of virtue: his text bears witness, again, to the problem of picturing virtue with anything other than given signs, or, in his words, images beneath a veil.

As Steinemann has discussed in his in-depth study of Gabriel Paleotti's *Discorso*, the Bolognese Cardinal's discussion of virtue is a revealing contrast to Ripa's method of personifying virtue.[223] I revisit Paleotti's thoughts here to shed light on the discussion of Bocchi that will conclude this chapter. Paleotti bemoans the shortcomings of the strategies for depicting virtue discussed above because the images are either too obscure, or too plain and uninspiring. Though Filarete and Ripa are secular writers, Paleotti's commentary (the main goal of which was to regulate the creation and use of sacred images) illustrates the spiritual import of their writings. Paleotti criticizes the allegorical

219 Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, overo descrittione dell'imagini universali cavate dall'antichità et da altri luoghi da Cesare Ripa Perugino, opera non meno utile, che necessaria à Poeti, Pittori, Scultori, per rappresentare le virtù, vitij, affetti, et passioni humane*, 3rd ed. (Rome, 1603; facs. ed., Hildesheim: G. Olms Verlag, 1970). The first edition was printed in 1593.

220 "Le Imagini fatte per significare una diversa cosa da quella, che si vede con l'occhio." Ibid., proemio, 1 (pages are not numbered).

221 "non sono altro, che veli, ò vestimenti da tenere ricoperta quella parte di filosofia, che riguarda la generatione & la corrotione delle cose naturali, ò la dispositione de' Cieli, ò l'influenza delle Stelle." Ibid., proemio, 2.

222 On the tradition of figuring virtue, see Ernst H. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae: Philosophies of Symbolism and their Bearing on Art," in *Symbolic Images: Studies in the art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1972). On Ripa in the context of Gabriel Paleotti's discussion of virtue, discussed below, see Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 212–251.

223 See Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 212–251.

techniques used by authors like Ripa and Filarete (though not speaking specifically of them), writing that:

> it is a very difficult enterprise to figure [the virtues], because . . . they are understood only in the abstract, and as they are operations of the intellect, it is not possible for us to dress them so that they will become objects of the senses, nor can we put our eyes onto the body of that which is proper to the mind. Therefore it is seen by experience that those who have until now wished to represent these virtues have usually encountered one or two errors . . . The first has been of those who have searched to express them with high concepts and exquisite inventions . . . These men have given birth to works that are so obscure and intricate that without the help of some able philosopher or theologian . . . their concept stays incomprehensible. The other way has been of those who wish to make these concepts known to people and have figured them as is done vulgarly by using the form of a woman with clothes and signs that they give to her. The result of this is . . . that they lose all the dignity and splendor of their virtue, such that where these images should enrapture the soul with marvel and inflame it with ardor and goodness, it seems [as though one is] looking at something common and trivial, as are the women that one sees every day.[224]

So much, it would seem, for the efforts of Filarete, Ripa, Pinelli and many others whose veiled figures of virtue were either too obscure, or so common that

224 "è molto difficile impresa il figurarli, perciò che, essendo il genere e la specie cose universali, che s'intendono solamente in astratto, e sono operazioni dell'intelletto, non potiamo noi così vestirle che le facciamo venire obietto del senso, né possiamo sottoporre agli occhi del corpo quello ch'è proprio della mente. Laonde si vede per esperienza che quelli che sinora hanno voluto rappresentare alcuna di queste virtù sono ordinariamente incorsi in uno de'due errori . . . l'uno è stato di quegli che hanno cercato di esprimerle con alti concetti et isquisite invenzioni, per partirsi dalle cose volgari; e questi hanno partorito opera tanto oscura et intricata, che senza l'aiuto appresso d'alcun valente filosofo o teologo non se ne può cavare i piedi, e resta il concetto loro incomprensibile. L'altro è stato di quegli che, volendo farle conoscere al popolo, le hanno figurate, come volgarmente si usa, in forma di donna con gli abiti et insegne che le si danno; il che viene tanto ad abbassare et avilire la grandezza loro, che perdono tutta la dignità e splendore della virtù, talché, dove dovriano queste imagini rapir l'animo per meraviglia et infiammarlo d'ardore di bontade, rendono più tosto negligente il pensiero, parendoli rimirare cosa commune e triviale, come sono le donne che si veggono ogni giorno." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 456.

they lacked dignity. "Certainly," Paleotti writes, "it would be a thing more pleasurable than anything in human life to be able to express in images the true virtues and vices, such that they would make impressions on our senses of the beauties of virtues and the deformities of vice but as we have already said, we have not found even now a concept that can with dignity represent their greatness."[225] Paleotti confesses a desire to see virtue, acknowledging how it might enhance devotional practices and he points out the failings of earlier representations of virtue, which do not achieve a high emotional impact on viewers.[226]

Though Paleotti criticizes the overly complex or inappropriately simple depictions of virtue, he is ultimately unable to propose a solution to the problem, and in the tentative strategy he proposes he relies on other given signs, as Steinemann notes.[227] For instance, having argued that paintings of virtue exceed the power of written words, Paleotti recounts the story of a person who wrote on a wall the "diverse properties and conditions of many high virtues" so that when he was moved to vice he would return "right away to that place and, seeing the scripture," he would push these thoughts from his mind.[228] If such help could be given by these "few lines drawn on a wall," Paleotti wonders, "how much more effective must we judge the profit that would be had from leaving colored panels, judiciously formed, that to our senses impress the thing

225 "Seria certo cosa sopramodo giovevole alla vita umana, il potere esprimere le vere imagini delle virtù e vizii, acciò che ne'sensi nostri più efficacemente s'imprimesse la bellezza di quelle e la diformità di questi. Ma, come digià dicessimo, non si è trovato sinora concetto che possa degnamente rappresentare la grandezza loro." Ibid., 2: 458.

226 On this point, see also Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 212–251.

227 Paleotti actually uses the term "given sign," which is not surprising considering his broad familiarity with Patristic texts and philosophy in general. "I segni, che è terzo istrumento, sono di due sorti, o naturali, come è il fumo che esce dal fuoco e l'orma del piede, e questi ancora poco si stendono, overo sono artificiati, accettati dal consenso degli uomini, che si chiamano signa data, e questi sono o caratteri di lettere, note, linee, ziffere o cose simili, le quali non da tutti sono intese, né si sanno da chi non le impara, e l'imparare è di pochi." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 139–140. On using text in images of virtue, see Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 212–251, and on given signs see 76–77.

228 "fece distintamente scrivere nel muro della sua cella diverse proprietà e condizioni di molte altissime virtù e, come si sentiva tocco da stimolo alcuno di vanagloria, ricorreva subito a quel luogo; e rivedendo la scrittura, confondeva sé stesso." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 452.

that we must desire or abhor!"[229] Believing thus that an image would be more effective than the given signs of language, Paleotti suggests painters ought to base their images upon readings of "Christian poets." He recognizes, however, that this would be to defer the problem of picturing virtue onto another source, since the images would be deficient without words citing their textual source.

> And above all . . . we would praise greatly some brief and significant motto [written on the painting], that comes to bring soul and life to the image, since being formed of things that perhaps are not well known, they [these images] come to stay like a dead body, if they are not enlivened by some words or by [citing] the place in the approved author.[230]

Thus, the image without words indicating its given meaning was lifeless, revealing that the soul of the painting, the meaning hidden beneath the veil, was in part brought by the viewer upon understanding the painting's meaning. Paleotti, therefore, frustrated with the veiled images of virtue, could nonetheless not think of a way through which virtue could be pictured without recourse to given signs—in this case, written language. This example and the preceding ones illustrate the implicit tension between the abstract, immaterial ideal of virtue, which was unseeable, and the lived reality of virtue, which was said to be present on earth in Christ and then to a lesser degree in the lives of saints.

In contrast to the veiled images of virtue—the so-called allegorical images—there is a parallel discourse in the literature on art which describes naturalistic history paintings as being "unveiled." Paleotti, for instance, writes that paintings of sacred narratives are no longer hidden beneath a veil. Though many writers had noted that pictures were more easily understood by those who could not read (an argument perhaps first made by St. Gregory the Great and likewise elaborated upon by Leonardo), Paleotti explicitly points to this veiled/unveiled characteristic, suggesting not only that images were more

229 "Che se tanto giovamento sentiva egli da quelle poche linee dissegnate in un muro per raffrenare la propria confidenza e destarsi a maggior vigilanza, quanto più efficace dobbiamo giudicare il profitto che sia per uscire da tavolve colorite e giudiziosamente formate, che ne'sensi nostri imprimono le cose che debbono essere da noi desiderate o aborrite!" Ibid., 2: 453.

230 "lodaressimo assai alcuno breve e signifcante motto, che venisse a dar anima e vita alla imagine; poi che, essendo formata di cose forsi non molte note, viene a restare come corpo morto, se non è vivificato da alcune parole o dal luogo dello autore approvato, com di sopra in altro proposito si è discorso." Ibid., 2: 461.

readily understood by illiterate viewers but also that naturalistic images had made their interior meaning become their exterior form: they had unveiled themselves.[231]

> there are many amongst the faithful who are neither so able nor apt at understanding those sacred things that have been written. There are many for whom words do not make a sufficient impression in the mind . . . sacred images [however, are] now no more hidden beneath a veil nor in figures, but clear and explained . . .[232]

Paleotti argues, therefore, that interior meanings make themselves known, no longer as given signs but as natural signs: signs that refer to something else without any wish to do so. The once-veiled meanings make themselves known, no longer in words and complex emblems and allegories but across images of the natural world.

A similar claim about the interior and exterior nature of the painting, or the painting's visible body versus its invisible soul, is found in Lomazzo's encyclopedic handbook on the craft of painting, his *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*; echoing Paleotti, Lomazzo argues that paintings have both a surface appearance and an interior meaning, similar to words and their given significance. He writes

> that which is seen in the painting is less appreciated by the wise than that which is hidden beneath like a splendor, veiled by beautiful colors, in the same way that in poems, verses are read by us with delight more for the concepts and for the hidden substance, than for the harmonious binding of words that exteriorly is heard by the ear.[233]

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231 Gregory the Great, on the other hand, writes only that the viewer will be able to gather knowledge of the history. See *Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome* (*Books IX–XIV*), trans. James Barmby (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1898), book 9, letter 105.

232 "veduto nondimeno che molti seriano tra' fedeli non così capaci delle cose sacre, né atti ad intendere quello che fosse scritto; molti a chi le parole non fariano sufficiente impressione nella mente . . . l'uso delle sacre imagini [S. Giovanni Damasceno, De orthod. fide, iv, 17], non più sotto velo né in figura, ma chiare e spiegate." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 207. The use of the word 'figura' in this passage refers to the allegorical figures of Scripture.

233 "per ciò che è meno apprezzato nella pittura da savi quello che si vede, che quello che sotto si gli nasconde come splendore velato da belli colori, in quella guisa che nei poemi, e versi sono letti da noi con diletto più per i concetti & per la sostanza nascosta, che

The prime attraction of an image lies in its ability to contain a hidden substance, the nature of which is discussed in a passage from the prologue of his treatise, detailing how images aid memory. Surveying a spectrum of images, Lomazzo emphasizes the interior and exterior aspect of images, arguing that images have information beneath their exterior form. Written language, for example, "serves the memory for the sciences," and Egyptian hieroglyphs and Roman emblems conceal "great secrets of moral and natural things," from which it "follows clearly that painting is an instrument beneath which are contained the treasures of the memory."[234] Describing paintings as a form of external memory, Lomazzo writes that since "the corporeal memory cannot catch all things . . . the noble art of painting . . . was found by the intellect to help it."[235] On this point Paleotti was in agreement, having written that "artificial memory stays in place for the most part because of its use of [mnemonic] images."[236] Sacred images are similar to mnemonic images in this regard, Paleotti continues, since they are a "remedy" given by the Holy Spirit to remind the soul of spiritual things.[237] Lomazzo further clarifies how sacred images, like mnemonic images, refresh the memory by dramatically describing how sinners return to God when they see sacred images:

> Many wicked people and sinners who had already forgotten God, having seen the Holy image of Christ flagellated . . . returning in themselves and spreading rivers of bitter tears, have made great penitence . . . Who [amongst those who] see . . . the mysteries of our holy faith painted and the celestial glory is not moved to the love of such a merciful God . . . ? I do not say that images are the total cause of such great effects . . . but I say

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per quella armoniosa legatura di parole ch'esteriormente si sente all'orecchio." Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, 527.

234 "se è vero dico che gl'inchiostri, & le scritture fossero ritruovate per serbar memoria de le scienze, ne segue chiarissimamente, che la pittura è istromento sotto il quale è rinchiuso il tesoro de la memoria." "ricoprendovi sotto non solamente grandissimi segreti de le cose morali & naturali." Ibid., 3.

235 "si può dire ch'ella serva à l'intelletto come di tesoriera di suoi tesori . . . Mà perche ancora questa memoria corporale, non potrebbe capire tutte le cose . . . hà bisogno ella parimenti d'altre cose, & principalemente de l'arte nobilissima de la pittura, la qual fu ritrovata dal medesimo intelletto per aiuto suo." Ibid., 2.

236 "Sapendo noi che quella chiamata artificiosa sta la maggior parte posta nell'uso delle imagini." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 208.

237 "che rimedio trovò lo spirito santo a tanta varietà, imbecillità, e bisogno della umana natura? Niuno veramente più facile, più ispedito e più porportionato universalmente a tutti, che l'uso delle sacre imagini." Ibid., 2: 207.

> that paintings move the eye, and the eye keeps all . . . the images of the things that it sees in the memory and here it represents it to the intellect, which understands the truth of the falsity of these things and, having understood, it represents this to the will, which rejects bad things and loves good things . . .[238]

Therefore, naturalistic images are like memory images, not because they conceal a given significance in the way that an emblem or a hieroglyph does, but rather because they lead the viewer to higher truths about sacred mysteries. In Lomazzo's description, one is reminded of the compunctive effect of the miraculous Annunciation at the SS Annunziata as described by Bocchi, and also Paleotti's anecdote about the man who wrote the qualities of virtue on his wall: images affect penitence and tears because they represent people or events which have a higher meaning related to the salvation of mankind. Therefore it is not that an "image of Christ flagellated" means something else in the way that Ripa's figures of virtue signify something other than that which is seen by the eye; rather, knowing that the image is of Christ's Passion, the viewer is led to contemplate his or her salvation and in this way the image of a man being tortured bears on a broader meaning for humanity. Images unveil the hearts of men, penetrating their souls to remind the votary of their awareness of God, and it is specifically in the experience of compunction that one may know the interior aspect of the image.

Unlike the veiled images of virtue, which Paleotti writes are either banal or tediously complicated, sacred images refresh the memory, it appears, automatically: Lomazzo implies that "the intellect . . . understands the truth of the falsity" of sacred images without the same kind of decoding that hieroglyphs and Roman emblems might require. Lomazzo also focuses on the skin of painted bodies as the vehicle through which the viewer accesses the mysterious soul of the painting: as the painter reveals the interior emotions of painted figures across their painted skin, the painter is able to penetrate the hearts of

238 "Percioche molti scelerati, & peccatori scordatisi gia di dio, vedendo la santissima imagine di Christo flagellato . . . ritornando in se stess, & spargendo da gl'occhi fiumi d'amare lagrime hanno fatto asprissima penitenza . . . Chi vedrà una volta et un'altra i misterii de la santissima nostra fede, & la gloria celeste dipinta, che non si muova all'amore di cosi pietoso Dio . . . ? Non dico che le imagini siano causa totale di cosi grandi effetti, perche questa saria empia opinione; mà dico che la pittura muove l'occhio, & questo custodisce tutti i simolacri, & le imagini de le cose che vede nella memoria, & quelle li rapresenta à l'intelletto, il quale intende poi la vertà & falsità de quelle cose, & intesala, la raparresenta à la voluntà; la quale essendo le cose male, le avomina, essendo buone le ama, & per naturale inchinatione và dietro à loro." Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, 5–6.

the viewers, unveiling their hearts and reminding them to God. He describes, for instance, the visibility of the motions of the soul using language that is reminiscent of the terms used to describe the interior soul of the painting. The passions depicted on the body make "known the internal motions of people [better] than words, rather even more so as it operates from the body itself"; such painted bodies depict "those marvelous works of secret nature . . . [which are usually] hidden in the heart [but] demonstrated exteriorly in the body."[239] Though historians have discussed how gestures are coded culturally, in this passage the gesture is an automatic impulse free of convention; unlike given signs, these natural signs make themselves known, as Augustine said, without a desire to do so.[240] The terms with which Lomazzo discusses the motions of the soul present the passions as vehicles through which interior knowledge can be conveyed in a medium more powerful than words, hence supporting Paleotti's statement that naturalistic images are unveiled and more legible than words.

My purpose in contrasting the above writers is to make apparent some contradictory impulses that are variously manifested in Renaissance writings on art. On the one hand, as per Christian dogma, virtue is an abstract ideal that cannot be seen; on the other hand virtue is corporally embodied in Christ; similarly, degrees of virtue exist in the souls of saints and other historically real people. Following this belief, writers on art propose that virtue can only be depicted with given signs; the effectiveness of given signs, however, appears to fall short of images of sacred history. Such paintings seem to be unveiled because they appear to lead the viewer automatically to the meaning or "soul"

239 "Percioche con questa i pittori fanno conoscere . . . tutte le passioni, & gesti che puo mostrare . . . Che non meno per questa via si conoscono i moti interni delle genti che per le parole anzi più, per operarsi questo dal proprio corpo . . . Et quindi è che i pittori che queste cose intendono benche rari, fanno che nelle sue pitture si veggono quelle maravigliose opere della natura secrete, mosse da quella Virtù motiva che di continuo stando nel cuore nascosta, si dimostra esteriormente nel corpo, & manda fuori i suoi ramoscelli per li membri esteriori." Ibid., 108.

240 Modern scholarship on gestures discusses how gestures are coded differently in different cultures throughout time. Not surprisingly, given the attention to gesture during the Renaissance (for example, in books such as this one by Lomazzo), the Renaissance has been the focus of several studies in which works of art and literature are used to help understand the cultural language of gesture in Renaissance Italy. See for example, Peter Burke, "The Language of Gesture in Early Modern Italy," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1991). See also Konrad Eisenbichler and Philip Sohm, eds., *The Language of Gesture in the Renaissance*, in *Renaissance and Reformation*, new series 10, no. 1 (1986).

of the image, by reminding them to God in the same way that a written sign might remind them of its given meaning. If it is possible for painters to unveil meaning in this way, is it then possible to reveal virtue, which was hitherto only presentable in given signs? The question is addressed more directly and more imaginatively by Bocchi, whose writings have been framed before in the context of Paleotti's writings, and the Counter-Reformation generally.[241] As will be seen below, Bocchi attempts to explain how the body can be a natural sign of virtue. By looking at Bocchi in the context of the authors discussed above, we see more clearly the rigor of his thought and also the place it has in the culture of Early Modern spirituality and art history.

The 'Costume' of Virtue, Seeing Beneath the Veil and Francesco Bocchi

There may not appear to be any great difference between saying that passion can be seen on the face and that virtue can be seen on the face, though it in fact requires a significant philosophical shift. The latter argument proposes that the viewer can see the abstract form of virtue on a material body, since, as discussed above, virtue was a complex concept that resisted depiction and could therefore only be represented with given signs. To say that one was seeing virtue on the body or face, hence, was to say that one was receiving information that previously had been believed could only be demonstrated through veiled images. It was also necessary, in the Christian context, to account for how virtue, which was a product of the free will, was visible on the body, the form of which was not solely determined by an individual's free will.

Bocchi believed that the human face could convey the soul's virtue, though he recognized that this was different from saying passion was visible on the face. In the Aristotelian tradition within which Bocchi was certainly situating his writings, virtue was not equivalent to passion.[242] Aristotle claimed that the virtues were not passions since "we are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but . . . on the ground of our virtues . . . we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions."[243] This principle was maintained by many Christian philosophers, most notably St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, which Steinemann has discussed with respect to the definition of

241 On Bocchi and Paleotti, see Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 215–219.

242 The studies of Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 191–201, and Schöder, *Der kluge Blick*, confirm the close connection between Bocchi's writings and Aristotle.

243 Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1105b29–32.

virtue used by Paleotti in his writings on art.[244] Aquinas provided, however, that there was a relationship between passion and virtue since "it is plain that moral virtues . . . cannot be without passions," given that "the more perfect a virtue is, the more does it cause passion."[245] Therefore, in terms of the present discussion, to see passion on the face was not necessarily to see virtue although passion was present in virtue.

Aristotle (and Aquinas) further argued that virtue was the result of good habit (i.e. habit guided by reason), positing a relationship between virtue and time, since several virtuous acts made habitually over time made a person virtuous.[246] By implication, therefore, to argue that virtue could be seen on the face would be to argue that faces conveyed habits. Bocchi, as we will see, argued that the face not only showed incidental, passing motions of the soul, but also the history of a person's soul; literally, the face memorized the accumulated past motions experienced by a person.

In a discussion of the power of faces, in his treatise on the miraculous image, Bocchi proposes a relationship between the passions seen on the face and a person's virtue. Recalling Lomazzo, Bocchi writes that "the virtuous soul . . . prints its force onto the face," suggesting that this occurs in the same way that "wax consents when it is signed by a virtue/force more powerful [than itself] . . . in this way of being signed, the soul is printed onto the flesh and there shines . . . virtue." Therefore, Bocchi augments the discourse by proposing that virtue, rather than merely passion, is visible on the face. Furthermore, the effect of virtue is consistent with the definition of the natural sign given by Augustine: like a footprint printing itself into the ground, the passions print themselves onto the face. Again echoing Lomazzo's sentiments, Bocchi further states that passions are more immediate than words, since they reveal virtue "without forming words," speaking "silently and of its nature by manifest signal/sign."[247] Bocchi's use of the metaphor "the flesh is wax" further

244 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2a, q. 59, a. 1. On Aquinas, Paleotti and virtue, see Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 204.

245 "Si vero passiones dicamus omnes motus appetitus sensitivi, sic planum est quod virtutes morales quae sunt circa passiones sicut circa propriam materiam, sine passionibus esse non possunt." "Et sic per redundantiam huiusmodi, quanto virtus fuerit perfectior, tanto magis passionem causat." Ibid., 2a., q. 59, a. 5.

246 Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1103a15–20.

247 "L'animo adunque virtuoso nel volto stampa la sua forza, & altresi quello che è fornito di vizio: & si come acconsente la cera, quando è segnata da virtù piu potente, & mostra tosto l'imagine, onde è segnata cosi l'animo in su la carne si stampa, cioè il Costume, & vi traluce il vizio, & ancora la virtù, onde senza formar parole favella tacitamente, & di sua natura da segnale manifesto." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 38.

associates the face with memory: wax tablets were used as writings supports, and hence the wax "remembered" scripture. Bocchi's evocation of the metaphor here denotes that passion, far from being a passing event across the body, was remembered on the flesh of the body just as scripture was remembered on wax. These are not the fixed signs of physiognomics, but the imprinting of habitual expression.[248]

The term Bocchi uses to denote the quality of virtue seen on the face is *costume*, a term rich in associations, which has received some attention from modern scholars and, as shall be seen, implies a relationship to habit practiced over time; the following exposition of Bocchi's *costume* considers it in light of the impossibility of picturing virtue, as discussed above, and draws upon interpretations of other scholars, whilst emphasizing the relationship between the *costume* and philosophical definitions of virtue and the exercise of the free will over time.[249] Ultimately, Bocchi was using the word in a new way (something that he acknowledged), and so it would not be possible to graft the earlier meanings of the word onto his text. The word *costume* would today translate as either "custom" or "costume," though the word has been left untranslated because the modern meanings do not adequately convey Bocchi's intention, though the two English words do point to two facets of Bocchi's meaning.

Bocchi's *costume* is in many ways the visible "costume" with which one dresses one's body. In modern usage it might be said to be the way a person appears, their general visual presence and the way their personality is perceived. Indeed, this is the sense in which it is understood by some art

248 On physiognomy and pathognomics, see Kemp, *The Human Animal*, chapters 1 and 2.

249 There have been numerous other interpretations of this word: Moshe Barasch, "Character and Physiognomy: Bocchi on Donatello's St. George, A Renaissance Text on Expression in Art," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975) argues that *costume* was related to physiognomy, though for reasons outlined below, I am unconvinced by Barasch's argument (On Barasch's argument, see also Williams, "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi"). David Summers, "'ARIA II': The Union of Image and Artist as an Aesthetic Ideal in Renaissance Art," *Artibus et Historiae* 10 (1989) accepts Barasch's argument, and claims that the colloquial antecedent to *costume* was *aria*, a proposition persuasive in some respects. Williams, in both "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi," and *Art, Theory, and Culture*, relates *costume* to Aristotle's "character" in the *Poetics*, a relationship that is clearly well-founded, though here it shall be proposed that it also relates to "habit" in the *Ethics*. Perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of *costume* is presented by Schröder throughout *Der kluge Blick*, where he also notes the relationship to Aristotle's *Ethics* (174), and includes a discussion of the notion of habit and virtue with reference to the writings of Giovanni della Casa, 52–53.

historians: the character of the person as seen across their body.[250] Bocchi's first use of this word, in his early treatise in praise of the works of Andrea del Sarto, clearly suggests this meaning. The early text on Andrea del Sarto constituted the first attempt to apply Aristotle's *Poetics* to the theory of art and accordingly, the aspect of tragedy denoted by Artistotle's "character" (*ethos*, or, in Latin, *mos*) becomes, in Bocchi's treatise, *costume*.[251] By choosing the word *costume*, Bocchi uses the term that had already been used to translate Aristotle's *Poetics* from Greek into Italian, and in this early text Bocchi's use easily falls in line with the modern meaning of character: the individual personality of a person that remains with him or her throughout life, and which can in some sense be perceived visually.[252] He writes that *costume* allowed the viewer to discover "the quality and disposition of souls, those that for a great part of human life are manifest there."[253] In contemporary usage, however, the term "character" does not explicitly distinguish between natural inclination and the behavior elected by free will, which may or may not move contrary to that inclination.

The second English translation of *costume*, "custom," gestures toward those aspects of character that are elected by the subject and that are a developed over time: character is formed by customs, or habitual actions, which are the products of choice and/or inclination. It is clear that, for Bocchi, to see the *costume* of a person was to see how habitual actions had "costumed" or "dressed" his or her body.[254] The *costume* was not something that was predetermined at birth (like physiognomy), though inclinations would already be present at that time. It had been formed over time and could change depending on how one used one's free will. This is clear in a late definition of *costume* in the discourse on the miraculous image, where Bocchi offers a second definition of the term in addition to the one found in his treatise on St. George.[255] He therefore clarifies that

250 See the discussion of *aria* and *costume* in Summers, " 'ARIA II.' "

251 On the etymology of *costume* and the Latin *mos*, see also Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 54.

252 See, for example, Aristotle, *Rettorica et poetica*.

253 "la qualità et dispositione degl'animi, i quali una gran parte del corso della vita humana ci manifestano." Francesco Bocchi, "Discorso sopra l'eccellenza dell'opere d'Andrea del Sarto, pittore fiorentino," ed. Robert Williams in "A treatise by Francesco Bocchi in praise of Andrea del Sarto," by Robert Williams, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), 125.

254 On this topic with respect to Bocchi's readings of Giovanni della Casa, see Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 52–53.

255 It appears that, likewise, it has subsequently generated confusion amongst modern scholars. Bocchi's use of the term at the beginning of his treatise on *St. George* takes examples

> One calls *costume* therefore a continuous usage that the soul takes from operation; that which is moved from natural inclination very often becomes a habit: because the soul, moving itself now to virtue and now to vice, and frequenting [this action], increasingly it easily takes the quality of that *affetti*, from which it is moved to operate. This *costume*, that is, this frequented action (because proceeding from the soul it is not an object conformed to exterior senses) for its great vigor arranges the face to this quality that to it is proper and natural. The virtues and vices have the force to paint the face as colors paint figures and from the disposition of the soul one calls man virtuous and now full of vice; which on the face is marvelously apparent. When the face is printed by the soul in this way, as has been said, it is called *costume*; as the soul is *costume*-ated, the nature of the soul becomes a manifest signal/sign [on the face]. By the Greeks it is named γθος, by the Latins *mos*, and by us *costume*.[256]

Bocchi's term refers not simply to the visibility of a person's inclinations—as in the science of physiognomy—but actually the complex relationship between frequented action, dependent upon free will, and the passions within the soul. In this passage Bocchi clearly places his concept of costume within the realm of Christian-Aristotelian notions of virtue.

If *costume* is "continuous usage," it naturally pertains to virtue in Aristotle's *Ethics*, in which virtue is defined as a reasonable habit, a concept later inter-

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of "costume" from Classical literature, in which it is unclear whether this term describes natural unchangeable features of the body, or something that develops as a result of the will.

256 "[Hora, perche gli si è nominato il Costume molte volte, & per avventura potrebbe generare oscurità, come che quello, che da noi si è detto sopra'l San Giorgio di Donatello, potesse bastare, accioche sia palese, diciamo sotto brevità alcune cose tuttavia, onde senza difficultà la forza di questo Costume, & la natura si conosca.] Egli si chiama Costume adunque una continovata usanza, che piglia l'animo di adoperare; la quale mossa da naturale inclinazione bene spesso si converte in habito: perche movendosi l'animo hora à virtù, & hora à vizio, & frequentando con ispessezza prende qualità agevolmente da quelli affetti, onde egli si muove all' operare. Questo Costume, cioè questa azzione frequentata (peroche procedente dall'animo non è oggetto conforme a' sensi esteriori) per suo molto vigore dispone la faccia à quella qualità, che à lui è propria, & naturale. Hanno forza le virtù, & vizii di dipingere il volto, come i colori di effigiare le figure: & dalla disposizione dellanimo si chiama l'huomo virtuoso, & tal'hora pieno di vizio; la qual cosa nella faccia mirabilmente apparisce. Quando si stampa adunque l'animo nel volto nel modo, che si è detto, gli si chiama Costume; il quale, come è l'animo costumato, della natura di quello è segnale manifesto. Da'Greci è nominato γθος, da'Latini mos, & da noi Costume." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 33–34.

polated into Christian philosophy by Aristotle's medieval commentators. It has been well noted that Bocchi was indebted to Aristotle's *Poetics*; likewise, exploring his relationship to Aristotle's *Ethics* in more depth proves enlightening.[257] By being sensitive to the precepts of the philosophy of virtue in the *Ethics*, Bocchi is able to argue that virtue, and not just fleeting passion, can be visible on the face. Aristotle writes that "moral virtue comes about as a result of habit,"[258] and likewise Bocchi describes how a person's whole life can be seen on his or her face, emphasizing how habitual actions leave physical traces on skin: "signs of the face are messengers of our heart which uncover the thoughts . . . these, in the first glance, give testament on the outside how virtue is arranged on the inside . . . and of the whole life they present a clear testimony."[259] As was discussed above, Lomazzo and Paleotti relate paintings to memories; likewise, Bocchi's *costume* is a memory of a person's life. The face did not only show the passions, it remembered or memorized the past of the soul. The concept of *costume*, therefore, is explicitly different from the quality of soul that physiognomists perceived on the face and, in fact, Della Porta wrote that it was the *costume* or the habits of the soul that escaped physiognomists. By claiming that the *costume* showed the virtuous habits of the soul, Bocchi's assertions presumably did not risk contradicting the church, since the *costume* was formed as a result of free will.

If it is correct to interpret Bocchi's *costume* as an indication on the face conveying the present and past of a person's soul, then this was to argue that the image could convey complex information regarding the decisions that a person had made throughout his or her life. The idea that habitual passions could be inscribed into the face was not original to Bocchi: Leonardo, for instance, seems to have believed that expressions that occur repeatedly on the face can become carved on it, which Martin Kemp has described as "inscribed pathognomics: . . . the muscular inscription of temperamental characteristics."[260]

By considering Bocchi's *costume* as a sign of virtue in light of the Aristotelian definition, it appears that the *costume* indicated something close to, though

257 Bocchi's indebtedness to Aristotle's *Ethics* is noted by De Koomen, "Aristotle's 'Poetics' Into Art Criticism," and as well in Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 174.

258 Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1103a15–20.

259 "Sono i segni del volto messaggieri di nostro cuore i quali scoprendo i pensieri . . . Questi in prima vista fano fede di fuori, come dentro è disposta la virtù; & se gran pregio, o gran valore, o quello, che è contrario; vi alberga, palesano in poco spazio, & quasi di tutta la vita chiaro testimonio ci propongono." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 12. Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 164, also notes the relationship between *costume* and habitual passion.

260 Kemp, *The Human Animal*, 41.

slightly more complex than, what Leonardo proposed. For instance, virtue did not consist of simply maintaining a single passion throughout life but of responding to each scenario according to the occasion. Aristotle writes that to define virtue as simply "certain states of impassivity and rest" was incorrect for it was "absolute" and did not account for the manner and time in which one was to act in these ways.[261] From this Aristotle derives his well-known doctrine that virtue is "a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean . . . determined by a rational principle . . . a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect."[262] I suggest that this philosophical understanding of virtuous behavior as a complex action dependent upon contextual factors helps us to understand the difficulty of depicting or sculpting a virtuous face. If virtue, which produced passion, was not an absolute or fixed behavior, then it is perhaps reasonable to conclude that the resulting passions were not in themselves absolute, but rather, like virtuous behavior, similarly complex. An artist would need to know, therefore, how to convey and how to imagine the residue of mixed passions on the face resulting from virtuous actions. For example, Bocchi notes that people who had a constant character were not difficult to represent.

> Some are found who, on their face throughout the course of their life one same *costume* is seen . . . In these, in my opinion, there should not be such difficulty [to create their portrait, unlike] those who by many thoughts are always accompanied in their soul, as though by many colors of *costume* they have the face painted and colored.[263]

One of the challenges of conveying *costume*, therefore, was knowing how to show the mixed passions that left different traces on the face.[264] Bocchi tells us that Demetrius, for example, a successor of Alexander, was difficult to paint because his face was full of various passions: "lightness," "gentleness" but also "terror" and "gravity," such that "no [painter or sculptor] ever, no matter how much he tired himself, was able to imitate [Demetrius] such that in every

261 Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1104b25–30.

262 Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1106b35–1107a5.

263 "Sono ritrovatisi alcuni, nel volto de' quali in tutto il corso di loro vita un costume medesimo si è veduto . . . In questi, come io mi avviso, non dee essere tale difficoltà, che i pittori e gli scultori molto meglio non esprimano che coloro i quali, sì come da molti pensieri sono sempre nell'animo accompagnati, così quasi da molti colori de' costumi hanno la faccia dipinta e colorita." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 136.

264 On this theme, see also Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 166, 174.

part it resembled him."[265] Parts of his *costume* were always "escaping" from the brush or the chisel.[266] The complex nature of virtue, for example, could be seen on the face of Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*, in which Bocchi sees contrasting emotions on the face of Judith: "she demonstrates courage and fortitude and, with a certain divine fortitude lent to her from God, she shows no fear for the great thing [that she is doing] nor for the proud head that she holds in her hands but with youthful frankness she is happy and secure" (Figure 17).[267] A mixture of qualities is also seen on Donatello's *St. George*: "he has that virtue . . . and this is a certain terror, that is mixed with a certain sweetness from which, in my opinion, delight and marvel, pleasure and stupor is generated in other souls" (Figure 18).[268]

The difficult combination of sweetness with terror may be interpreted in light of the Aristotelian belief that virtuous people would pursue virtue even when it was painful to do so, until they took a sort of pleasure in this pain.[269] Likewise, it was the accumulation of life's experiences that one could see on the faces of Scipione and Annibale as told by Bocchi, cited from Tito Livio, hence indicating once again that the *costume* was the result of actions accumulated over time and that at times this would lead to the presence of several qualities at the same time on one face.[270]

The mixture of passions on the face was a common trope in the literature on art, and was used to express how the souls of great or very virtuous people were difficult to fathom: if exterior passions demonstrate the heart, then the unexpected mixture of contrasting passions indicates the workings of a mysterious soul. At the second council of Nicea a painting of the martyrdom of Saint Euphemia was celebrated for showing the mixed passions of shame and virility on the face of the virgin, a text that is later discussed by Gregorio

265 "non solamente era leggiadria e mansuetudine, ma terrore ancora e gravità; onde, quandtunque molti pittori e motli scultori a contrafarlo imprendessero, nessuno però giammai, comecché motlo si affaticasse, il volto suo poté, che del tutto somigliasse, imitare." Ibid., 3: 136–137.

266 "Perché una o due di queste parti o il pennello o lo scarpello sfuggendo." Ibid., 3: 137.

267 "si mostra pur ella ardita e forte, e con una certa divina fortezza da Dio prestatagli non temer(e) punto del gran caso e della fiera testa che tiene in mano, ma in giovenil franchezza molto esserne lieta e sicura." Ibid., 3: 148.

268 "Et appresso egli vi ha quella virtù . . . e questo è un certo terrore, il quale con suavità e mescolato, onde sì come io avviso, diletto e maraviglia, piacere e stupore negli altrui animi si genera." Ibid., 3: 190.

269 Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1104b4–15.

270 "et a faccia a faccia riguardando ciascuno la persona dell'altro e riconoscendo i segni delle prodezze ricordate." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 137.

FIGURE 17 *Donatello*, Judith and Holofernes (*detail*) (*c. 1456–57*). *Sala dei Gigli, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

FIGURE 18 *Donatello*, St. George (*detail*) (*c. 1415–1417*). *Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA/MINISTERO PER IBENI E LE ATTIVITÀCULTURALI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

Comanini in his dialogue *Il Figino*.[271] The trope is also evoked in Alberti's *De pictura*, where the author commends the classical artist Euphranor for being able to show the many facets of Alexander Paris' character.[272] The importance of combining passions together is addressed by Lomazzo, who, typically, reduces the issue to listing which passions can and cannot be represented on the same face.[273] After listing which emotions can be pictured together, he recommends that the passions should be well suited to the narrative depicted. Hence, Abraham sacrificing Isaac should show piety, sorrow and obedience, and on Isaac all the same emotions should be expressed together with fear and pain.[274] Bocchi thus picks up a common theme in literature on art, but links it more directly to the Christian-Aristotelian philosophy of virtue.

As a natural sign, the *costume* of virtue succeeds over veiled depictions of virtue, or those described in letters or other given signs. Like Lomazzo, Paleotti and Leonardo before him, Bocchi argues that the *costume* communicates more directly than words: just as an orator's words could persuade people, similarly the *costume* of a great person could inspire the people who looked at it.[275] Donatello's sculpture was said to be like a good friend because it shared with the viewer the secrets of its soul; even though it was mute it appeared to speak and move.[276] Finally, the beauty of Donatello's *St. George* was so great that it could

271 "L'atto della vergine era mischiato di vergogna donnesca e di virile costanza, perché, quasi vergognandosi del cospetto degli uomini, teneva gli occhi fissi alla terra, ma stava tuttavia intrepida, nulla paventando l'amaritudine della battaglia . . . Poi dice che 'ı pittore dell'istoria di Santa Eufemia aveva molto meglio co' suoi colori mischiato i costumi della vergogna e della virilità (cose che son ripugnanti), di quello che quegli altri pittori della rea donna di Colco avessero fatto." See Comanini, *Il Figino*, 3: 310–311.

272 Alberti, *De pictura*, 2.41.

273 See Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, book 2, chapter 18.

274 "Il che sapute, & inteso facilmentte poi si accoppiano insieme i moti, & si rappresentano nella faccia in quella guisa che si conviene all'istoria, & all'effetto onde sono mossi; come per cagion d'essempio in Abraam quando crede di dover sacrificare à Dio il figliuolo, la pietà il dolore, & obedienza, & in Isac i medesimi effetti mescolati con tremore, & doglia." Ibid., 170.

275 "Oltre a ciò, non si vede egli che, se un principe non solamente con le parole, le quali in questo affare sono potentissime, ma ancora con la fronte e con l'animo, come che sia, mostra qualche indizio, che gli animi altresì di coloro che ascoltano e che guardano, ora si rallegrano et ora si contristano, e quasi come prigionieri del costume vincitore, dove egli vuole, si lasciano guidare." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 140. Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, has called Bocchi's treatise a meditation upon the relationship between words and images, 211.

276 "E certamente, sì come l'amicizia allora è di iù pregio, quando l'uno amico scabievolmente all'altro mostra i suoi pensieri et il secreto del suo animo, così le statue che esprimono

not be described in words, a statement that naturally recalls the transcendence of mystical meaning described above.[277] In the concept of the *costume*, therefore, Bocchi articulates how naturalistic representation can lead the viewer to the interior of the object, also giving the object the power to move and have a material impact on those who view it. Naturalism, therefore, far from being a technology that disenchanted images, making them simple products of rational construction, became the very tool with which artists imbued works of art with interior and invisible qualities. The effect of the *costume* upon the viewer relates closely to concerns in the writings of both Paleotti and Lomazzo, demonstrating that Bocchi's ideas did not emerge in isolation, but that they rather articulate aesthetic concerns relevant to other writers, though accomplished in Bocchi's case within a (pseudo-)philosophical framework.[278]

Bocchi, as Lomazzo and Paleotti, felt that the *costume* was useful for being easily memorized; Bocchi's descriptions of the lasting impact of the image conjures up the Lucretian passage about visible skins peeling off of objects and being received by the eye of the viewer. Images live and have intentionality, in part because they continue to live inside the minds of those who see them. For instance, in regard to the miraculous painting of the Annunciation, Bocchi states that the saintly face of the Madonna stays in the memory as a "certain gentle stimulus, not for only many days, nor even many years, but in all [who look at this painting] lives forever a desire shining and burning together with divine thoughts."[279] Bocchi asserts that faces in works of art have the same power as living faces, arguing that one should not think that "the soul of he who looks at [the statue] is not moved, in the same way as with [looking at] living men. Rather, many . . . adopt and often create this *costume* in their soul"

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vivamente il costume sono latresì delle altre molto migliori e di più stima . . . avvengaché e' sia verso di sé tacito e muto, nondimeno con quella fronte e con quel ritratto del valoroso animo e magnanimo, non di tacere, ma di volersi muovere e favellare si dimostra." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 144.

277 "quantunque ella per questa cagione facile et aperta apparisca, nel trattamento suo nondimeno oscura e difficile si prova." Ibid., 3: 132.

278 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 297–298, also discusses Bocchi in light of Paleotti, particularly with respect to the relationship between sacred oratory and art.

279 "Et di vero non solo, mentre che è scoperto, & che vedere si puote questo santissimo volto, egli si prova mirabile effetto, come è cosa chiara, ma dura oltra cio un certo gentile stimolo, non dirò motli giorni, ne molti anni, ma & vive sempre in tutti una voglia accesa di divini pensieri, & che arde insiememente & poscia che vedere ad ogni hora non si puote, frequentando il luogo, ove è venerato, sormonta à peregrini pensieri, & di celesti fantasie in sue sante preghiere altamente si avanza." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 20.

as a result of gazing at the figured face.[280] The soul impresses passion onto the face, therefore, and then the sight of that face again impresses the soul of the viewer, printing within the unique composition of that person's soul.[281] Seeing a *costume*, therefore, had "the force to arrange . . . our souls in various ways."[282] Similarly, Paleotti remarks that it is "affirmed by the philosophers and doctors, who say that according to the various concepts that our fantasy apprehends of the forms of things, there strong impressions are made, from which are derived alterations and notable signs in bodies."[283] As such, Bocchi argues that in the presence of such works, people will be "spurred to imitate them."[284] Just as the *costume* is formed by habitual virtue, so too do images impress the sign of virtue into the soul through habitual exposure.[285] Accordingly, Bocchi writes that "noble youths [should] go . . . [with] the eyes of the mind, held fixed onto the statues of this artist, where prudence and strength and gravity and all the saintly *costume* . . . can be learned."[286]

Bocchi's *costume* raises questions about the artist's ability to imagine virtuous faces: if virtue had such an intimate relationship with the soul's habits and history, it seems natural that painting virtuous people was frequently described as a difficult if not impossible task, especially in the case of people no longer available to observe firsthand. Hence, the unique sign of the virtuous soul impressed onto the face had to be imagined by the artist, and Bocchi emphasizes the seeming impossibility of doing this: "as it is a difficult thing to

280 "Ma egli non si dee già pensare che le statue siano prive di questa virtù, e che l'animo di chi guarda, come gli uomini viventi altresì, elle non possano muovere; anzi, motlo in ciò adoperano e sovente creano quel costume nell'animo, che da quello che vi era prima è tutto diverso e tutto diffrente." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 141.

281 The trope of the portrait of a loved one painted in the heart of the lover, and occupying the soul, is discussed in Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory*, 152–153.

282 "ma che ne' presenti ancora si possono trovare, e che hanno forza di disporre ancora gli animi nostri in varii modi." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 140.

283 "affirmato da' filosofi e medici, dicendo che, secondo i varii concetti che apprende la nostra fantasia dalle forme delle cose, si fanno in essa così salde impressioni, che da quelle ne derivano alterazioni e segni notabili nei corpi." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 230.

284 "affissando gli occhi nelle opere di Donatello . . . arà occasione di divenir migliore e sarà spronato ad imitarle." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 147. See Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 171, 280 on young people being instructed by images of virtuous people, with reference as well to Aristotle.

285 On this theme with regard to Paleotti, see Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 210.

286 "Vadino dunque i nobili giovani considerando e gli occhi della mente tengano nelle statue di questo artefice affistati, dove e prudenza, e fortezza e gravità e tutti i santi costumi con maestrevoli modi et incomparabili possono apparare." Bocchi, *San Giorgio*, 3: 147.

find in living men this heroic virtue, much more difficult will it be to any artist to go considering and imagining that *costume*."[287] Donatello, however, was able to find the *costume* of St. George within his mind by lifting his thoughts high: "without resting in that beauty and in those forms that at every hour one may see in others, with his thought lifting itself high he found a heroic one full of majesty, full of perfection."[288] There is a parallel between the process by which Donatello sculpted St. George and the effect of the sculpture itself, for Donatello had to awaken what was dormant and hidden within the stone in the same way that the sculpture refreshes the memories of divine thoughts hidden within the hearts of viewers. Hence, Donatello had a "great intellect" to "contemplate in his mind and then express in the marble with felicitous artifice these heroic and gentle thoughts . . . to give motion . . . [to that which] in front of him was located without honor and sepulchered in darkness."[289]

Finally, just as the unique character of a person's virtue was impressed upon his or her face by the accumulation of frequented passions, the painted surface was similarly an index, or a natural sign, of the artist's virtue. As discussed in the part one of this chapter with reference to stories about Giotto and Pontormo, the artist's soul flowed naturally into the soul of the painting, a soul which could be perceived through the marks on the painted surface but which was not reducible to these marks. As such, one might say that the quality of the soul was "pressed" into the surface of the painted image in the same way that the passions signed the face like an impression in wax.[290] At the end of Bocchi's treatise on the Annunciation, it is not only the arrangement of marks on the painted surface, nor the colors chosen, nor any visible quality that gives the image of the Annunciation its miraculous properties, but rather the very fact

287 "Ora, sì come egli è cosa difficile che questa eroica virtù negli uomini viventi si trovi, motlo più difficile sarà ad ogni artefice andare considerando e quel costume imaginando che a lei è proprio e dicevole." Ibid., 150.

288 "il quale, senza fermarsi in quella bellezza et in quelle forme che ad ogni ora egli vedeva in altrui, col suo pensiero altamente innalzandosi ne trovò una eroica, pina di maestà, piena di perfezzione." Ibid., 186.

289 "Bene fu agevole al grande intelletto di questo nobile artefice e contemplare nella sua mente et isprimere poi nel marmo con felice artifizio pensieri eroichi e gentili, e far quasi vivo quello che non ha vita, dar moto ove è fermezza e ridurre in colmo la virtù della scultura, che innanzi a lui giaceva senza onore e nelle tenebre sepolta." Ibid., 132.

290 The kinds of marks made by a person's penmanship were thought to reveal the soul, as revealed in the book by Camillo Baldi, *Come da una lettera missiva si conoscano la natura e qualità dello scrittore* (Carpi, 1622), discussed in Bolzoni, *Gallery of Memory*, 161.

that it had been inscribed by the hand of God.[291] This is evident in the amusing story that is told of the Milanese Cardinal who, enamored and enraptured with the beauty of the miraculous image of the Annunciation painted by God, asked for a copy of the painting to be made.[292]

> the task was commissioned of Alessandro Allori, a painter of our times not only in his art optimally esteemed, but also a man of grave judgment, the request was furnished with alert diligence and after the painting was sent to Milan as the Cardinal desired with good order. With so much devotion it was received by the Cardinal and by his people . . . because he was enraptured to have in his city a portrait of such a sovereign thing, or rather a divine thing, it ignited his people to a certain marvelous faith. They, when later seeing the celestial face became enraptured beyond all charity and stupor. It came then, not after much time that the Cardinal went to Rome for business of the Holy Church, and stopped in Florence. And one morning . . . he wanted to see once again this miraculous Virgin. [And when he did] . . . he remained even more than ever in admiration and overcome by an uncommon stupor. He turned to certain very wise men that were present and said that the copy of the Annunciation that had been sent to Milan did not resemble this miraculous Madonna in Florence at all, nor did it conform to its rare beauty. To this he was answered modestly: "Be sure Your Illustriousness, that not of industry, nor of diligence has the painter of your copy been lacking . . . but it is certain that he tires himself in vain, he who believes that he can arrive at such a divine thing as this with human study. Because neither the painter with his artifice, nor the faculty of speech with words, nor man with thoughts can lift himself so high . . .[293]

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291 Schröder, *Der kluge Blick*, 282, also discusses the theme of "every painter paints himself" with respect to the image of the Annunziata.

292 I have discussed this story within the context of copying in Renaissance art in "Artistic Devotion."

293 "A nostri giorni è stato di bontà singulare, & per una voce commendato da tutti Carlo Buonromeo, Cardinale di S. Parssede, Arcivescovo di Milano; questi dopo la vista della santissima Nunziata, à cui divedrla fu conceduto con suo agio, come grazia singulare domandò al Gran Duca Francesco, che in un quadro à suo nome qui in Fiorenza ella fosse ritrata, quanto piu simile si potesse. Perche commessa la cura ad Alessandro Allori, pittore di nostro tempo non solo in sua arte ottimamente avvisato, ma huomo ancora di grave senno, fu fornita la bisogna con isvegliata diligenza: & appresso fu la pittura, come voleva il Cardinale con buon ordine mandata à Milano. Con quanta divozione ella fosse ricevuta dal cardinale, & dalla sua gente, di legieri non si direbbe con parole: perche

The failure of Allori's painting, according to the witnesses of this event, is therefore not its accuracy; rather, it is the inability of any mortal artist to replicate what the miraculous painting accomplishes. The goodness of the miraculous painting is not reducible to its visual qualities, though its power is conveyed through its appearance.

With his concept of *costume*, Bocchi was able to discuss how virtue was seen on the face while situating his argument within a philosophical tradition, thus permitting him to argue that virtue could be pictured as a natural sign. It may be that the virtue pictured on faces in paintings and sculptures would never arrive at the divine beauty of the virtue of Christ or another holy figure. Nonetheless, it framed the artists' task as that of imagining and then representing the virtuous movements of the soul as seen memorized on the faces of saintly people.

It is fair to speculate that Bocchi was motivated to develop this language from his own experience of paintings and sculptures, though scholars have emphasized the context of Counter-Reformation politics, which was surely a point of reference for many writers of this time, as will be discussed in the following chapter. However, if the Counter-Reformation ignited debate about visual art, it would be misleading to argue that the religious experiences described in writings such as Bocchi's were created by such a context and had no roots in earlier tradition or genuine experience. It is, therefore, likely that Bocchi's rapturous writing is the expression of his genuine joy at being able to see St. George; of having been given the image of a young man within whom he perceived such virtue. Bocchi may have truly desired to see the face of someone who was able to cling to virtue despite the difficulty of this task.

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infiammato di havere in sua Città un ritrato di cosa sovrana, anzi divina, havea accesi i suoi di certa mirabile credenza: i quali alla vista poscia del celeste volto si infiammarono oltra modo di carità, & di stupore. Avvenne poscia non dopo molto tempo, andando il Cardinale à Roma per bisogne di Santa Chiesa, che si fermò in Fiorenza & una mattina, poi che all altare della Santissima Nunziata hebbe detta Messa, volle vedere di nuovo questa miracolosa Vergine. Perche all'apparire del suo sembiante rimaso piu, che mai ammirato, & sopra fatto da insolito stupore, si volse à certi huomini molto intendenti, che present erano, & disse, come il ritratto della Nunziata, che à Milano gli era stato mandato, non punto somigliava questa miracolosa Madonna di Fiorenza, ne à sua rara bellezza punto era conforme: A cui fu risposto modestamente. Sia certa V.S. Illustrissima, come ne di industria, ne di accuratezza ha mancato il pittore, perche il suo volere sia fornito; ma tenga per certo, come in darno si afftica chi con humano studio crede di arrivare à cosa tanto divina, si come è questa. Perche ne il pittore col suo artifizio, ne la facultà del dire con parole, ne l'huomo con pensiero tanto si innalza . . ." Bocchi, *Imagine miracolosa*, 88–89.

Like many other Christians, he might have very much wanted to conform his own actions to virtue, and thus an image in which the unimaginable combinations of various passions suddenly became very convincingly imagined and represented may have helped him to model himself after this ideal. He might have meditated upon this face or carried it with him in his day-to-day life in the same way that meditation handbooks of the time instructed people to carry images of certain ideas in their minds as they went through their day, as people today might try to conform their behaviors to that of other known people, or to people represented in the cultural images and representations of our times. As over four hundred years separate us from the culture in which Bocchi wrote his meditations on art, one may also wish to recall how, in his time, the personality type imagined on the proud yet tender face of Donatello's *St. George* may have indeed seemed new and worthy of discussion. The *costume* revealed the history of the soul in an instant, and thus the progress of the soul was uncovered for all to see as the veil had been lifted from the heart.

CHAPTER 5

Invention and Amplification: Imagining Sacred History

Besides encouraging artists to seek out the virtue of holy people in religious paintings, writings on art also bear witness to the closely related problem of how to imagine sacred history, that is, how to picture moments from the life of Christ or other holy people. By moving now from a study of bodies and faces to a study of the depiction of sacred history, Alberti's method of painting is being followed, in that "parts of the *historia* are the bodies,"[1] and, "composition is that reason of painting whereby the parts are composed together in a picture."[2] But the *historia* was more than simply a composition with bodies; it was a moment in time. Gabriele Paleotti, one of the authors who will be the focus of this chapter, distinguishes all images according to two categories: they are either "things or they are operations."[3] To clarify, Paleotti explains that "a painter can paint things or persons, such as the blessed Virgin, the sacred cross . . . or operations such as the Baptism of the Lord, the Annunciation of the Madonna."[4] Accordingly, this chapter explores the problems related to depicting the actions and operations of sacred narrative.

The revolution in image-making techniques, out of which Renaissance naturalism and the interest in figuring "operations" from Scriptural narrative emerged, has often been interpreted in light of spiritual history. Some widely discussed theories suggest that artists' renderings of sacred history were shaped by developments in prayer and meditation: rising devotion to the Passion and the Virgin at the end of the Middle Ages by making use of what have become known as "affective meditation" strategies whereby Christians dwelled upon visualizations of sacred narrative, is believed to have contributed

1 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.33. "historiae partes corpora." "parte della istoria sono i corpi." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.33.

2 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.33. "Est autem compositio ea pingendi ratio qua partes in opus picturae componuntur." "Composizione è quella ragione di dipignere con la quale le parti delle cose vedute si pongono insieme in pittura." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.33.

3 "dicendo che tutto quello che cade sotto l'arte del formare imagini o sono cose, o sono operazioni." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 268.

4 "Sì che potressimo dire che può il pittore dipingere persone e cose, come la benedetta Vergine, la sacra Croce, il Volto Santo e simili; overo operazioni, come il Battesimo del Signore, la Nunziazione della Madonna, con altre somiglianti." Ibid., 2: 269.

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to the naturalistic turn in European art.[5] Mendicant preaching as well, which in many ways promulgated affective meditation and interior devotion more broadly, has been posited as a determining factor: whilst encouraging listeners to identify with Christ's sufferings, preachers stimulated a process of visualization that is reflected in visual art.[6] It is therefore surprising that attitudes toward narrative art made evident in Renaissance writings on art traditionally have not been examined in light of this prayer practice, the techniques of Christian rhetoric, or spiritual literature more broadly, except in the case of some religious writers whose writings must be considered part of the Counter-Reformation movement. Previous studies of pictorial invention have typically studied invention as a poetic process, indebted also to the classical art of rhetoric, or have examined the cognitive faculties engaged in invention.[7] As will become evident below, I do not disregard the validity of these points of view, but rather aim to reveal how art theory writings, those by both secular and ecclesiastical authors, may be usefully studied bearing these contemplative traditions in mind.

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5 The rise of affective meditation is outlined by Richard William Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) in chapter 5, positing the importance of St. Anselm and St. Bernard. The phenomenon is more comprehensively examined by Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, who looks for the historical causes of rising devotion to Christ's humanity in the Middle Ages. Historical causes for affective meditation are also discussed by McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, who notes the importance of female piety. Aspects of interior visual contemplation are also examined by Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*. The interaction between visual contemplation and art are broadly discussed in the essays in Hamburger and Bouché, *The Mind's Eye*.

6 As noted in chapter 1, note 65, the relationship pivots around the relationship between the mendicant movement and penitential preaching. The mendicant movement and art was originally discussed by Thode, *Saint François d'Assise et les origines de l'art* and re-examined by Bourdua, "13th–14th Century Italian Mendicant Orders and Art." Also see Anne Derbes, *Picturing the Passion in Late Medieval Italy*. The relationship between art and preaching has also been recently examined by Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *The Renaissance Pulpit: Art and Preaching in Tuscany, 1400–1550* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), see especially the introductory chapter for a bibliography on sermon studies and visual art. Also see Lina Bolzoni, *The Web of Images: Vernacular Preaching from its Origins to St. Bernardino of Siena* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

7 The poetic qualities of invention are presented by Lee, "Ut pictura poesis"; the first part of Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* investigates pictorial invention from many points of view, including poetry. Also Summers, *The Judgment of Sense*, chapter 10 examines invention in light of beliefs about cogitation. See also Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," *Viator* 8 (1977).

This chapter studies the writings of authors directly involved with the Counter-Reformation, whose beliefs regarding image composition must be considered within that context, and so a portion of this chapter is dedicated to unpacking reform-minded concerns. Looking at the writings of those involved with the Counter-Reformation alongside other writers not as closely affiliated with this movement demonstrates how certain attitudes descend from more broadly disseminated spiritual traditions, even if they are inflected for particular purposes by religious writers involved in the project of religious reform.

In the most basic sense, the Counter-Reformation impacted on the history of images through the decrees of the Council of Trent, which generally reaffirmed that images were valid aids to devotion, in response to Reformation objections to images.[8] Decrees of the Council of Trent stated that images should not be idolized as Gods themselves, or worshipped because "any divinity, or virtue, is believed to be in them"; however, by teaching church doctrine ("by means of the histories of the mysteries of our Redemption, portrayed by paintings or other representations, the people is instructed") and inciting

8 The decrees of the Council of Trent on art treated images together with the "invocation, veneration, and relics of saints." See *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumentical Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. James Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848). On the history of the Council, see Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Dom Ernest Graf (London: T. Nelson, 1957–61). The effects on art were first outlined by Charles Dejob, *De l'influence du Concile de Trente sur la littérature et les beaux-arts chez les peuples catholiques* (Paris: Thorin, 1884). Early in the twentieth century, art historians Werner Weisbach and Nikolaus Pevsner debated the effects of the Counter-Reformation on mannerist and Baroque art, a conflict summarized by A.W.A. Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna: Visible Reality in Art After the Council of Trent*, trans. R.R. Symonds (Rome: Kunsthistorisches Studiën van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome, 1974), 1: 142–144. Boschloo notes the importance of finding clear links between Reformists and artists in order to discern the effects of the movement. On the Reformation and art, see Carl Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979). The effects of the Counter-Reformation on art are often studied through individual artists and therefore it is difficult to generalize. Most recently, the effects of the Counter-Reformation on art have been re-evaluated by Marcia Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art*, see especially chapters 1 and 5. Michelangelo's responses to the Reform movement have been examined in Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*; see also Marcia B. Hall, *Renovation and Counter Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta Maria Novella and Sta Croce, 1565–1577* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Steven F. Ostrow, *Art and Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Rome: The Sistine and Pauline Chapels in S. Maria Maggiore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Giuseppe Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius*, (New York: P. Lang, 1992), discusses the Counter-Reformation specifically from the point of view of writings on art.

virtuous behavior (people "may order their own lives and manners in imitation of the saints"), images were useful devotional objects.[9] Broadly, reforms to images during the Counter-Reformation stressed the didactic purpose of images, which were intended to serve the devotional needs of popular, largely illiterate viewers. Image clarity was thus a central concern (let "there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged"), which has been perceived in part as a backlash against the excessively stylistic works of mannerist art ("all lasciviousness [should] be avoided").[10] Besides image clarity, scholars have perceived the effects of the Counter-Reformation on art through a myriad of related issues, including the emphasis on the cult of the saints and the Virgin, affective piety, archaizing themes in art, and the reaction against allegorical imagery, to name a few.[11] This chapter cannot consider the question of the Counter-Reformation on all these aspects of late sixteenth-century art. Rather, with respect particularly to the writings of Gabriel Paleotti, I will consider how the question of narrative composition bears on Counter-Reformation concerns, examining particularly the relationship between the reform of preaching and imaginative techniques of pictorial invention, looking at how these reforms are related to attitudes toward allegory in sacred art more broadly. Paleotti's writings have been the subject of numerous studies, increasingly in recent years as interest in the Counter-Reformation grows; my own discussion benefits from these studies while aiming to draw out some aspects of his thought regarding pictorial invention, broadly speaking.[12]

Gabriele Paleotti's Theory of Sacred Art and Contemplative Ascent

The spiritual traditions that informed many Renaissance writings on art are evoked prominently in a text touched upon in the previous chapter, Gabriele Paleotti's *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane*, in which the Bolognese cardinal and bishop instructs how correctly to follow the decrees of the

9 The decree is reprinted in an appendix to Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art*.

10 Ibid., appendix.

11 See note 8, above.

12 The studies of Paolo Prodi and Holger Steinemann, for instance, are referred to throughout this chapter. The editions of Paola Barocchi, and Stefano Della Torre and Gian Franco Freguglia have both been consulted. A recent translation, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. William McCuaig (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2012) appeared after this chapter was completed.

Council of Trent concerning sacred art.[13] Though below I will look in more depth at how Paleotti's theories of art reflect Counter-Reformation concerns, in the present section I am mostly interested in showing how his ideas are informed by broader spiritual traditions; Paleotti's learned text cites an array of Patristic and medieval authors, making his writings a useful lens through which to explore earlier spiritual traditions and their bearing on late-Renaissance images. The first book of Paleotti's volume defines and justifies the use of images, appealing to numerous authorities. In the first two sections of this chapter, I will examine Paleotti's theoretical understanding of sacred images in order to demonstrate how the traditions of meditation, Scripture reading, and preaching bear upon image-making practices. Paleotti himself aligns image making with reading, preaching and praying when he suggests that if it is permitted to "preach the mystery of the passion" and also to "read about it in an approved book," then it is also permitted to picture it.[14] As will be seen, the process through which images are constructed is also tightly wedded to these traditions.

The relationship between images and meditative contemplation can be perceived in Paleotti's theory of images in a passage from the first book of Paleotti's treatise. In Paleotti's theory of images, a representational image is an object with which the viewer's mind participates in order that it may be brought to a new thought, or mental experience.[15] Moreover, the image, in Paleotti's description, encourages the mind to consider not the image itself, but the truth it represents, a truth that lies within the mind of the viewer even

13 On the history of the text, see Paolo Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica dell arti figurative nella Riforma Cattolica* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1984), 30–33 and Paolo Prodi *Il cardinale Gabriel Paleotti* (*1522–1597*) (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1959–1967), chapter 18. The *Discorso* was intended originally to have five books but only the first two were completed. A Latin edition of the text was published for the public in 1594. Recently the text has been studied in depth by Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*. Also, see the recent Italian edition, Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle immagine sacre e profane*, ed. Stefano Della Torre, trans. Gian Franco Freguglia, presentation Carlo Chenis (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002).

14 "se è lecito di predicare il misterio della Passione o la vita d'un santo, perché non sarà permesso parimente il poterla con figure rappresentare? . . . E se è lecito a leggerla in un libro approvato, perché non di guardarla in una tavola fedelmente e divotamente compartita?" Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 225. As in the previous chapter, citations refer to Barocchi's edition in *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento*.

15 Paleotti's definition of images is extensively discussed in Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*.

before the viewer has seen the image, and which is impossible to consider outside the grace of God. Paleotti writes that

> we say that in images three things can be considered: the first is the material from which [the image] is made, which would be to say gold, silver, ivory, and such things. The second thing is the form given by the author to this material with design, lines, and shadows and such things. The third is that which results from the form of the material and the figure together, which is that thing that we call an image, representing another thing, of which it is a similitude, and in looking at it various thoughts can occur within us: the first directed to the material, as precious, rich, and delightful (*vaga*) in colors. The other, as a thing designed by a great artist and figured with much diligence. The third is to the image, inasmuch as it makes the effect of representing another thing in which we no longer attend to the work as material, or as a figure, but to the thing represented, that is within [the image] by means of representation and on this we fix our thoughts.[16]

Paleotti thus finds that images encourage thoughts within viewers in three ways: thoughts directed toward the material, toward the form, and finally toward the object that is recalled or represented in the image. Ultimately, it is this third category on which we "fix our thoughts." Paleotti's system seems simple enough, though any practical application might demonstrate how difficult it is to distinguish between that which is represented and how it is represented.

A consideration of Paleotti's sources illuminates the uniquely Christian aspects of his theory. Paleotti is indebted to Aristotle via the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas for the above analysis of images, though Paleotti recognizes three species of thoughts instead of the two identified by Aristotle and

16 "diciamo che nelle imagini si possono considerare tre cose: l'una è la materia della quale elle son fatte, come sarebbe a dire l'oro, l'argento, l'avorio e cose tali; la seconda è la forma data dall'autore a tal materia con disegni, lineamenti et ombre etc.; la terza è ciò che risulta dalla materia e figura insieme, ch'è quella cosa che chiamiamo imagine, rappresentate un'altra cosa, della quale essa è similitudine. E di qui nasce che nel mirarla possono cadere in noi varii pensieri: l'uno dirizzato alla materia, come pregiata, ricca e vaga di colori; l'altro, come a cosa disegnata con grande arteficio, e con molta diligenza figurata; il terzo, come ad imagine, cioè in quanto fa lo effetto di rappresentare un'altra cosa, nel qual modo non attendiamo più all'opera come materia o figura, ma alla cosa rappresentata, che è in lei per modo di rappresentazione, et in questa fissiamo il pensier nostro." Ibid., 2: 254–255. This passage is discussed briefly by Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, appendix 44.

Aquinas.[17] In the passage of the *Summa* utilized by Paleotti, one of Aristotle's discussions of images is briefly summarized.[18] The original Aristotelian edicts states that "a picture painted on a panel is at once a picture and a likeness: that is, while one and the same, it is both of these, although the being of both is not the same, and one may contemplate it either as a picture, or as a likeness."[19] Both Aristotle and Aquinas thus assert that although physically a painting is one material object, it has two "beings": the first, its material being, and the second, the being of its similitude. The second of the two properties only comes into existence when the painting is apprehended in the mind of the viewer and related to the object of which it is a similitude. After all, if no one were ever to behold the picture and realize that it was a similitude, it would remain only a physical object in the same way that, say, a written sign is only a language if it is possible for someone to understand it as a language. Although Aristotle himself did not put it this way, it might be said that the second quality, the quality of similitude, actually exists only together with both the image-object itself and the viewer who sees it. By adding that images can also be considered according to the form through which the similitude is created, Paleotti acknowledges that likenesses can be created in many different ways, which befits the context of debate on art in which he composed his treatise: there is more than one way to create a similitude and not all are equal.

Besides this perhaps superficial addition to Aristotle's theory, further in his treatise Paleotti's discussion reveals that he is developing a theory of images that is subtly more complex than his sources. For instance, memory plays an important role in this Aristotelian theory of images: if one looks at the painted representation of an object, one is immediately reminded of the original. The being of similitude is created together with the memory of the figured

17 Aquinas is cited by Paleotti not much further on. By identifying three species of thoughts, Paleotti places more emphasis on the artist's style than did his predecessors, not always acknowledged by historians. See Pamela M. Jones, "Art Theory as Ideology: Gabriel Paleotti's Hierachical Notion of Painting's Universality and Reception," in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 129.

18 "there is a twofold movement of the mind towards an image: one indeed towards the image itself as a certain thing; another, towards the image insofar as it is the image of something else." Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3, q. 25, a. 3. "duplex est motus animae in imaginem:—unus quidem in ipsam imaginem, secundum quod res quaedam est;—alio modo in imaginem in quantum est imago alterius." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3, q. 25, a. 3.

19 Aristotle, *On Memory and Recollection*, in *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*, ed. and trans. W.S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936; reprint 2000), 450b20.

object and the image itself. However, Paleotti differs from his sources in that he is discussing images of which the viewer has no memory: representations of Scripture, moments in time that occurred long before their visual representations and hence of which the viewer would have no real memory.[20] Paleotti nonetheless affirms that an image stimulates some kind of real encounter with the represented object, unknown though that object may be. Paleotti writes that

> when in fact we look with our eyes at an image, our minds fix themselves on that which is represented and contained in [the image] by means of representation and from this it is born that that honor that is deserved to the thing represented, can also mysteriously be attributed to the image . . .[21]

Paleotti's words suggest that, through "mystery," (a word discussed in more depth below) the image provides a direct, mental experience with some aspect of the figured object. He writes in an earlier passage that "the beauty (*vaghezza*), variety of colors, and other ornaments" that mediate the represented object and comprise the artist's style are "ornaments, accessories to" the object, which he revealingly refers to as the "soul of the picture."[22] The image, therefore, is not simply a sign that prompts the mind to consider the object that it represents; it is an object that in some way contains the figured object, not within the painting itself, but in a state that exists with the mind of the viewer and the painting together. In the Aristotelian definition of the image, there is no suggestion that the experience of an image allows the viewer to access the soul of the figured object. What is accessed is merely the visual memory of that object. With this metaphorical language—"l'anima della pittura," "contenuta in essa"—Paleotti suggests that the mind of the viewer ultimately transcends contemplation of the physical image and accesses some essence or soul of the object represented on which it fixes its thoughts. In developing these

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20 This is a theme also developed in Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 132–172. See also my discussion of the circumstances below.

21 "Nel terzo modo . . . la mente si fissa nella cosa rappresentata e contenuta in essa per modo di rappresentazione, e di quì nasce che quell'onore, che si conviene alla cosa rappresentata si potrà ancora misteriosamente tribuire alla imagine, secondo i gradi di latrìa, iperdulìa e dulìa, di sopra da noi dichiarati." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 255.

22 "Il fine della pittura serà l'assomigliare la cosa rappresentata, che alcuni chiamano l'anima della pittura, perché tutte l'altre cose, come la vaghezza, varietà de'colori et altri ornamenti, sono accessorie ad essa." Ibid., 2: 210.

ideas, Paleotti appears to be amplifying the Tridentine explanation that "honor which is shown [to images] is referred to the prototypes which those images represent."[23]

It seems that Paleotti believed that viewers carried some notion of biblical stories in their minds. But the mind of man does not contain within it a recollection of, for example, an actual scene from sacred history; rather, it has knowledge of the truth of this scene, the truth of sacred history.[24] One may compare Paleotti's belief with Augustine's Christian Neoplatonic theory of sight, briefly discussed in chapter one. In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine names three species of sight: bodily sight (seeing through the eyes), spiritual sight (recalling things seen in the mind) and intellectual sight (contemplation of divine Ideas without reference to physical constructs).[25] By rising contemplatively through these levels of sight, the mind eventually moves from contemplation of the physical body to the intellectual truth of material reality. As such, Augustine conceptualizes vision as a way to recall truths that are in the mind, which is very different from the Aristotelian theory referred to by Paleotti, in which images are signs that recall memories of things that have already been seen. Paleotti's discussion of the image is indebted to both writers: superficially, he uses Aristotle's definition but the metaphor of the soul of the image, upon which the mind of the viewer becomes fixed, is foreign to Aristotle. In both Augustine and Paleotti, the image does not recall something new; it recalls an unchangeable truth that is within the mind of the viewer waiting to be uncovered. The eye does not concentrate on the painted image itself but rather turns back into the mind to gaze upon truth.

Paleotti clearly had such Augustinian ideas in mind as he wrote his treatise: Paleotti refers to the Augustinian concept, explicated in *De Trinitate*, that man's mind is an image of the Trinity of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son.[26] Threefold divisions abound in Paleotti's theory of images, perhaps indicating a desire to find Trinitarian nobility in other aspects of sight. In fact, he divides the pleasures that may be obtained through sight into three categories

23 See Hall, *The Sacred Image in the Age of Art*, appendix.

24 In connection with this "remembering" of events that have not been seen, see Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 66–69.

25 See Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, book 12. This Augustinian idea is increasingly being used to illuminate medieval and Early Modern attitudes toward art; it was perhaps first used for this purpose by Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, chapter 1. See also Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, chapter 4.

26 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, books 8–15. See Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 133, although the idea is attributed to Aquinas.

that are heavily indebted to the Augustinian theory outlined above. Asserting that pleasure of something presumes cognition/knowledge of it (recalling the Augustinian edict discussed in chapter three that knowledge precedes love),[27] Paleotti finds three kinds of cognition arising from the pleasures of sight. The first, which arises "by means of the senses when the object [of perception] is proportioned to them," is called "animal or sensual"; the second pleasure is "called rational," which "judges universal things abstracted from all material"; and the third is supernatural, being born "from a divine light infusing us through faith, through which we believe and know things that exceed not only the capacities of the senses, but also all human discourse and rational intelligence."[28] To illustrate this point, Paleotti takes the example of someone looking at the stars in the sky, seeing some stars farther away, some greater, "others that scintillate, others that move, others that stay fixed," the "variety and beauty" of which gives great pleasure to the senses.[29] The rational pleasure is engaged when the mind contemplates "the course of the planets and the constant order of each, and the effects on plants, animals, and many other elementary things that derive from them."[30] The third form of cognition follows when one considers "how much more excellent is that which has fabricated [the sky], and with how much forethought and wisdom it desired that, by means of these created things, to make steps for men to penetrate eternal [things] and to excite them to desire celestial goods."[31] The principle of

27 Paleotti cites Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1–2, q. 1, a. 4.

28 "Laonde dicemo che ogni piacere, che si piglia d'una cosa, presuppone sempre che preceda la notizia di essa; perché di quello che non si conosce non si sente piacere né dispiacere. Questa cognizione negli uomini è di tre sorti: l'una animale, che si ha per via dei sensi, gustando, odorando, toccando etc.; l'altra è razionale, che, se bene ha principio anch'ella dal senso, passa però per via della ragione e discorso a grado più alto e giudica le cose universali astratte da ogni materia; la terza è sopranaturale, nascendo da un lume divino infusoci mediante la fede, per mezzo della quale crediamo e conosciamo cose che eccedono non solo la capacità de' sensi, ma ancora ogni discorso umano et intelligenza razionale . . . E però dalla prima cognizione, che si ha per mezzo de'sensi quando l'oggetto è conveniente e proporzionato a quelli, ne nasce una dilettazione che si chiama animale overo sensuale." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 216–217.

29 "alcuni maggiori, altri che scintillano, altri che si movono, altri che stanno fissi; dalla quale varietà e bellezza sente il senso grandissimo piacere." Ibid., 2: 217.

30 "Comincia dipoi il medesimo a discorrere con la ragione intorno alla grandezza di ciascuna stella, e la volubitlià de' cieli, il corso de' pianeti e l'ordine costantissimo di ciascuno, e gli effetti che nelle piante, negli animali et in molte altre cose elementari derivano da quelli." Ibid.

31 "Oltre di questo ne siegue la terza cognizione, imperò che, considerando l'uomo la rara et ammirabile bellezza di questo cielo, pensa tra sé stesso, illuminato da Dio, quanto più

ascension described in this passage is repeated variously throughout Paleotti's book: in another passage he writes that our "imbecility ordinarily does not allow that we can rise to the contemplation of sublime things without the foundation of those that are inferior."[32] Although this is a general reason through which all material things may become stepping-stones to celestial contemplation, it therefore follows that images of sacred people are especially worthy of being represented visually and then venerated.[33] Likewise, the importance of the similitude of painterly imitation has been discussed in Steinemann's study of Paleotti's text, in which he notes the role it plays in stimulating the viewer's response.[34] Paleotti's theories of images, drawing on an array of explicit sources as well as traditional beliefs, posit that representational images are objects with which viewers may potentially engage in contemplative exercises in order that they may lead the viewer inward; in fact, this is consistent with Paleotti's spirituality in general since, by studying his sermons, Paolo Prodi concluded that the central theme was the interior experience of faith through conversion.[35]

In this theory it may seem that Paleotti grants images a share of divinity, coming dangerously close to transgressing the Tridentine decree that images do not contain virtue. However, to avoid this confusion, Paleotti distinguishes three ways through which it may be believed that an object is divine, based on its relationship to God: "first, believing that the thing adored is divine

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eccellente sia quello che l'ha fabricato, e con quanto providenza e sapienza abbia voluto, per mezzo di queste cose create, fare scala agli uomini per penetrare le eterne et eccitarli desiderio dei beni celesti." Ibid., 2: 217–218. These passages are given special attention by Jones, "Art Theory as Ideology."

32 "noi rispondemo che, poi che la imbecillità nostra ordinariamente non comporta che possiamo salire alla contemplazione delle cose sublimi senza l'appoggio di queste inferiori." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 162.

33 Paleotti later differentiates between the specific case of venerating images and the more general process through which material objects lead to contemplation. "onde noi riveriamo le loro imagini non come cose per sé stesse onorabili, essendo materiali, né meno per quella sola causa generale ch'elle ci inalzino alla contemplazione delle cose celesti (perché questo può avvenire ancora nella figura del cielo, del sole, degli animali, delle piante e di tute le cose create . . .). Ma noi prencipalmente veneriamo queste imagini, perché la intenzione de' fedeli è dirizzata ad onorare la memoria de' santi, rappresentataci allora e concetta da noi nel grado e forma che si conviene." Ibid., 2: 248–249.

34 See, for example Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 58, 63–64.

35 Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, 2: 110. "Tutta la predicazione del Paleotti può infatti dirsi centrata sull'uomo interiore, sulla conversione a Dio nello spirito come base di tutta la vita religiosa, sulla vocazione."

either absolutely or by participation . . . [secondly], believing that it contains a divine thing; and thirdly, believing that it at least represents God."[36] In the first category, Paleotti includes miracle-working images, such as those "not made by hands of men," or those that have "touched the body, face or other part of our Lord . . . from the touch of which alone there remains an impression of the figure of the body."[37] The second of Paleotti's categories includes such things as "the tabernacle of the sacrament . . . and likewise reliquaries, where there are relics of saints," which can be thought to contain divinity.[38] Finally, the third category pertains, naturally, to the ordinary representation of sacred themes in images. Paleotti's categories would seem to imply that there is a neat distinction between man-made images and the divinity they represent; however, in practice, Paleotti himself appears to collapse these boundaries. Paleotti's metaphorical language regarding the interior soul of a painting, noted above, echoes his discussion of the tabernacle as the resting place of God; when he tries to distinguish between miraculous images and ordinary images in another section, he slides into anecdotes about the power of man-made images which sound much like those reported of miraculous paintings.[39] Thus, while discussing images, Paleotti falls naturally into the language of the miraculous and the divine: as described above, he opens up traditional theories of images to accommodate practices and attitudes toward images that the original theories did not reflect. The effect is perhaps to create more ambiguity than clarity: do images indeed have a soul? What is the difference between conversion worked by a miraculous image and a man-made image? As will be

36 "Ma noi rispondiamo che la adorazione si può essercitare da noi in tre modi: l'uno, credendo che la cosa adorata sia divina o assolutamente o per participazione, come di sopra; l'altro, credendo che essa contenga cosa divina; il terzo, credendo che essa almeno rappresenti cosa divina." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 251.

37 "cioè non fatta per le mani d'uomini, ma invisibilmente per opera divina." Ibid., 2: 198. "si dirà sacra, perché abbia toccato il corpo o la faccia o altro del Signor nostro o d'alcuno de' suoi santi e da quel solo tatto li sia remasa impressa la figura del corpo." Ibid., 2: 197.

38 "Nel secondo, teniamo noi che 'l tabernacolo del Sacramento non sia già Dio, ma che vi sia riposto Dio; e pariemente i reliquiarii, dove sono reliquie di santi certe et approvate, contengono anch'essi cose divine per participazione." Ibid., 2: 251.

39 See for instance, book 1, chapter 26, where Paleotti states that he will talk about the effects of "natural" images rather than those made by divine means, ibid., 2: 230. "et intendiamo ora solamente di ragionare di quelli effetti che possono chiamarsi naturali, aiutati però dalla superna grazia." He then proceeds to recount how men are miraculously converted by images in ways that echo stories discussed in chapter one of this study. Ibid., 233. "un signore che, avendo fatta ferma deliberazione di ammazzare un suo nimico, entrato in chiesa e riguardata la imagine d'un Crucifisso, sentì subito tutto commoversi . . ."

seen, Paleotti's ambivalence is also reflected in his meditations on the closeness between images and Scripture and images and sermons, illustrating how sacred art objects sat at the interstices of multiple devotional practices.

How Images Are like Scripture and like Sermons in Paleotti's 'Discorso'

The belief according to which material objects may lead to divine contemplation is, as has been briefly touched upon elsewhere, a feature of Christian biblical exegesis; as will be demonstrated below, Paleotti also modifies theories of images by attributing to them qualities hitherto reserved for Scripture.[40] These qualities concern primarily the multiple meanings of Scripture. As noted in chapter one, St. Thomas Aquinas writes that "in Holy Writ, spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material things," since man attains "intellectual truths through sensible objects."[41] There is, thus, symmetry between the contemplative ascent facilitated by visual objects and the ascent possible through Scriptural exegesis. Man makes the ascent to "intellectual truths" through Scripture by interpreting the Bible's manifold spiritual meanings.[42] The fourfold meaning of Scripture is summarized by Aquinas, who writes that

> that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division . . . Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are

40 On the differences rather than similarities between written signs and images in Paleotti, see Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 90, also discussed below in this chapter.

41 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 9. "Est autem naturale homini ut per sensibilia ad intelligibilia veniat; quia omnis nostra cognitio a sensu initium habet. Unde convenienter in sacra Scriptura traduntur nobis spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1. q. 1, a. 9.

42 See Henri De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, vol. 1, chapter 2, on the varying theories of the multiple layers of Scripture.

> types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense.[43]

As per a centuries-old tradition, therefore, Aquinas sees four senses in Scripture. The literal level of meaning is the foundation upon which the three spiritual senses are revealed: the allegorical, which concerns something similar to typology (when the Old Law is a type of the New, or when the Old Testament prefigures the New Testament); the moral or tropological, which instructs how people should act; and the anagogical, which foretells "eternal glory." Although Aquinas systematized this kind of spiritual reading, many others previously had written about and explained these ideas.[44] Therefore, just as through contemplation of the visual world one may ascend to intellectual sight, so too, through reading Scripture, could the reader elevate him- or herself to divine truths.

Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* was one of the most influential texts in which methods of biblical interpretation were outlined; as will be seen in more depth below, it had a renewed importance during the Counter-Reformation among Christian orators. Augustine proposes that, though most of the time written signs refer to things, since the Bible is a divinely-inspired text, in the Bible things can also be signs of other things and therefore they can be simultaneously things in themselves as well as signs of something else. An example of a thing that is a sign of something else is "the log which we read Moses threw into the bitter waters to make them lose their bitter taste [Exod. 15:25] . . . These are things, but they are at the same time signs of other things."[45] Augustine notes that it is only God who has the power to represent things with

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43 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 10. "Illa ergo prima significatio qua voces significant res, pertinet ad primum sensum, qui est sensus historicus, vel litteralis. Illa vero significatio qua res significatae, per voces, iterum res alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis, qui super litteralem fundatur, et eum supponit. Hic autem sensus spiritualis trifariam dividitur . . . Secundum ergo quod ea quae sunt veteris legis, significant ea quae sunt novae legis, est sensus allegoricus;—secundum vero quod ea quae in Christo sunt facta, vel in iis quae Christum significant, sunt signa eorum quae nos agere debemus, est sensus moralis;—prout vero significant, ea quae sunt in aeterna gloria, est sensus anagogicus." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q. 1, a. 10.

44 Aquinas admits that there is more than one model and Paleotti does not appear to subscribe to one system rather than another. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 10.

45 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.2.2 "Hae namque ita res sunt, ut aliarum etiam signa sint rerum." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0020).

other things: they are "divinely given signs contained in the Holy Scriptures."[46] Therefore, as Scripture is the Word of God, it is only in Scripture that things can refer to other things. Likewise, Aquinas acknowledges that God "has the power, not only of adapting words to convey meanings (which men also can do), but also of adapting things themselves"; when the "things signified by the words in their turn also signify other things, [this second meaning] is called the spiritual sense."[47]

In his *Discorso*, we can observe Paleotti beginning to apply these principles of semiotic interpretation to visual art. It is clear that Paleotti was familiar with the semiotics of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*: besides it having been widely influential amongst Reformation preachers, Paleotti also refers to Augustine's concept of "given signs" directly in his text.[48] He appears to have relied on Augustine's interpretation of biblical signs when distinguishing between the images that artists make which represent things, and the images that God is said to have made, whereby images of things signify other things. This digression emerges in Paleotti's definition of images and it illustrates to what extent Paleotti believed that man-made images had the properties attributed to the Scriptural words that they represented. Writing that sometimes an image is considered as "a similitude and [at other times] also as a mystery which figures something that is dissimilar [from itself]," Paleotti evokes the scriptural example of the serpent that Moses fabricated "by the commandment of God" which, "inasmuch as it resembled the venomous serpents of the desert it was a true image and similitude; but inasmuch as it figured the passion of our Savior, it was not in the place of an image, but of a mystery."[49] This passage refers to the Old Testament story in which Moses fashions a bronze

46 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 2.2.3. "quia et signa divinitus data, quae scripturis Sanctis continentur, per homines nobis indicata sunt, qui ea conscripserunt." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0037). This is taken up also by Hugh of St. Victor in his treatise on how to read Scripture, see the *Didascalicon*, 5.3.

47 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 10. "Illa vero significatio qua res significatae, per voces, iterum res alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis, qui super litteralem fundatur, et eum supponit." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q. 1, a. 10.

48 Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 140.

49 "volendo inferire che'alla imagine, tra l'altre cose, principalmente si ricerca che sia espressa da un'altra specie e che con similitudine rappresenti quella. È vero che tal volta si considera essa imagine e come similitudine e come misterio che figura un'altra cosa dissimile; sì come anticamente il serpente fabricato per commandamento di Dio da Moisè, in quanto assomigliava i serpenti velenosi del deserto, era vera imagine e similitudine; ma in quanto figurava la passione del Salvatore nostro, non era in luogo di imagine, ma di misterio." Ibid., 2: 135.

serpent that cures the Jews from the venom of real serpents.[50] In medieval theology, the snake was frequently interpreted as a type of Christ, since both had an internal goodness contrary to their external appearances, and accordingly St. Thomas Aquinas commented that the serpent was "lifted up as a *sign* [my emphasis]."[51]

When Paleotti refers to this story in his definition of images, however, he does not cite the Augustinian theory of signs discussed above, but rather an Augustinian discussion of images (through Aquinas), which states that "where there is an image, there is necessarily a likeness, but not necessarily an equality . . ."[52] Paleotti reformulates this law as "between an image and another thing [of which it is a likeness], principally it is required that [the image] be expressed in some other species and that with similitude it is represented."[53] As noted above, however, Paleotti also states that an image can likewise be "a mystery which figures something that is dissimilar [from itself]," since the bronze serpent "inasmuch as it figured the passion of our Savior, it was not in the place of an image, but of a mystery."[54] Neither Augustine nor Aquinas, in the passage cited by Paleotti at least, make mention of the *image* of "mystery" described by Paleotti, which appears rather to allude to the Augustinian theory

50 "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.' " (Numbers, 21:8).

51 Aquinas, *Commentary on St. John*, trans. James A. Weisheipl, and F.R. Larcher (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1980), 198. "Unde et dicitur: *in signum posuit eum*. Proprium autem serpentis est habere venenum; sed serpens aeneus venenum non habuit, sed figura fuit serpentis venenosi." Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, ed. Raphaellis Cai (Rome: Marietti, 1952), chapter 3, lecture 2, section 473. In the Gospel of John, Christ mentions this passage "just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (John, 3:11–15).

52 Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 189 (question 74). "Quia ubi imago, continuo similitudo, non continuo aequalitas: ut in speculo est imago hominis, quia de illo expresse est; est etiam necessari similitudo, non tamen aequalitas, quia multa desunt imagini, quae tamen insunt illi rei de qua expressa est." Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus* (Migne, PL 040.0085–0086). The seventy-fourth of Augustine's *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (Eighty-Three Different Questions) was probably known to Paleotti through Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, in which it is cited at least twice in passages to which Paleotti also refers. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q. 35, a. 1. It is also quoted by Paleotti in the passage just preceding the quotation under consideration.

53 "alla imagine, tra l'altre cose, principalmente si ricerca che sia espressa da un'altra specie e che con similitudine rappresenti quella." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 135.

54 "ma in quanto figurava la passione del Salvatore nostro, non era in luogo di imagine, ma di misterio." Ibid., 2: 135.

of *signs* described above. Such a modification suggests that Paleotti is actively conceptualizing images in terms that had hitherto been reserved for the discussion of Scripture.[55]

The serpent represents Christ by way of "mystery"; that is, through God's power it represents Christ even though it does not look like Christ in any way. It was only through God that the serpent represented Christ, and similarly it was only by the grace of God that one's faith could lead one to the truth of sacred history. As noted above, when Paleotti writes about penetrating representations of sacred history to their interior souls, he suggests "that honor appropriate to the thing represented can also be mysteriously attributed to the image."[56] By speaking about the serpent in the same terms, Paleotti emphasizes the need for faith. At another moment in the *Discorso*, Paleotti again evokes the story of the bronze serpent, explaining how it was only understood to be an image of Christ through the grace of God and the faith of the viewer:

> As it occurred in the times of antiquity that the serpent of metal, made by Moses by the order of God, was placed by some amongst sacred and mysterious things; and by others, instead, as an idol . . . Such that the same image can produce differences as many as the various concepts that spectators take from [these images] . . . Therefore we see in the case of the sap that is found in flowers in the countryside, that bees can make of it sweet honey, and spiders can make deadly venom.[57]

As far as Paleotti is concerned, therefore, there is no image that could act upon its viewers unilaterally. Without some degree of participation, knowledge and willingness on the part of the spectator, the image is useless or at best ambiguous. As in the Aristotelian definition of the image, an image of similitude only

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55 See Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 106–107, where this passage is discussed with a different emphasis on Paleotti's distinction between similitude and signification.

56 "e di qui nasce che quell'onore che si conviene alla cosa rappresentata si potrà ancora misteriosamente tribuire alla imagine, secondo i gradi di latrìa, iperdulìa e dulìa, di sopra da noi dichiarati." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 255.

57 "Questo aviene perché lo spettatore haverà concetto molto diverso nella imaginazione sua da quello che l'arterfice ha avuto, come anticamente il serpente di metallo fatto da Moisè per ordine di Dio ad alcuni era in loco di cosa sacra e misteriosa, ad altri in vece d'idolo . . . Di modo che la medesima imagine partorirà più differenze, secondo i varii concetti che di essa piglieranno i riguardanti . . . Onde noi veggiamo che ancor del succo de'fiori nati alla campagna le api ne fanno soave mele e le aragni ne cavano mortifero veneno." Ibid., 2: 171–172.

has meaning when held in the mind of a viewer. Likewise, once this similitude is beheld in the mind of the viewer, it can be translated to contexts as various as the viewers beholding it. Only in the Christian mind does the image produce "sweet honey." In fact, in one passage of his text, Paleotti follows this idea to its natural conclusion, observing that in a certain sense all images, no matter how seemingly irrelevant, can be used as spurs to celestial contemplation.[58] He maintains that images need to be religiously relevant, however, for the sake of those who are not educated enough to perform such contemplative inversions.[59] The emphasis Paleotti places on the beholder's share again reflects attitudes toward the Bible which, it was believed, needed to be subject to a particular Christian method of exegesis in order to yield truth. Thus, though the framework from which Paleotti begins is superficially simple, it hints that, like Scripture, painted images have higher levels of meaning than simply the truth of the objects they represent and he suggests that these meanings can be obtained only with the faith of the viewer and by the grace of God. It is worth noting in passing that the attention Paleotti gives to the brazen serpent may be a subtle response to iconoclasts who, whilst admitting that the brazen serpent was an example of a sanctioned image, nonetheless did not accept that images were therefore justified, since the image was eventually broken into pieces; furthermore, the serpent was for Luther a proof of the doctrine of justification by faith, since the image healed only through faith.[60] By implicating the serpent within his theory of images, Paleotti reclaims the motif for Catholics.

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58 "Sappiamo bene che di molte cose che paiono indifferenti uno ne potrà cavare utile, dove forse l'altro non ritrarà se non danno, per la disposizione di chi l'usa e diversità dei fini che si propongono; e che però non si può dire assolutamente che tutte queste sorti di pitture a tutte le sorti di persone siano inutili o causino danno, perché chi è dotato di spirito e di giudicio può e dalli uccelli e dai pesci e dai fiori e dalle citare e dai sassi cavare gran filosofia." Ibid., 2: 384–385.

59 "Tuttavia, perché pochi sono quelli che ascendono a questa speculazione, noi, parlando per l'ordinario, chiamiamo pitture buone e convenevoli quelle che di natura sua e proprietà ci rappresentano cose lodevoli et utili da sapersi per uso della vita umana." Ibid., 2: 385.

60 The importance of this motif in Reformation art has been noted by Hall, *The Sacred Images in the Age of Art*, chapter 1. See also Christensen, *Art and the Reformation in Germany*, 29–30. On the doctrine of faith and Luther, see Craig Harbison, *The Last Judgment in Sixteenth-Century Northern Europe: A Study of the Relation Between Art and the Reformation* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), 98, citing the work of Donald L. Ehresmann, "The Brazen Serpent: A Reformation Motif in the Works of Lucas Cranach the Elder and His Workshop," *Marsyas* 13 (1966–67).

As the above discussion suggests, in addition to reflecting attitudes toward the nobility of sight in general, Paleotti's theory of sacred images emerges from beliefs regarding the contemplation of Scripture. Paleotti emphasizes how images have properties and effects that replicate the written Word.

> Paintings are like open books that offer themselves to the capacity of whatever person, being composed with a language comprehensible to everyone: men, women, children, elders, wise and ignorant; nevertheless paintings are comprehensible to all people and to all intelligences without any need for a teacher or interpreter, only on the condition that the painter does not want to in any way twist [their meaning]. In addition to this, images in a brief space of time, in one instant alone, with one single look, can render the people capable of understanding, whilst wise men must spend much time and [lamp] oil with the books to be able to understand them.[61]

This passage clearly rehearses sentiments derived from Gregory the Great's defense of images as the Bible of the illiterate. But there is a change of emphasis evident in this passage and elsewhere in Paleotti's writings: echoing Leonardo's earlier statement, Paleotti hereby suggests that the impact of painted Scripture is instantaneous and that it does not require interpretation. This is potentially an incredible suggestion since, in line with Aquinas' belief in the mystical meanings of Scripture, the Word had embedded within it manifold meanings that were traditionally believed only accessible through contemplation: the process by which one ascends from material to immaterial things might presumably require time. Perhaps more importantly, Paleotti's theory above seems to admit a wide margin for errors of interpretation, suggesting that only some will access the sweet honey in images. Paleotti's statement begs the question: to what degree were the spiritual meanings of Scripture, through which Christians ascend in contemplation, granted to visual art, and does this ascension occur instantaneously, as he seems to suggest?

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61 "dove che le pitture servono come libro aperto alla capacità d'ogniuno, per essere composte di linguaggio commune a tutte le sorti di persone, uomini, donne, piccioli, grandi, dotti, ignoranti, e però si lasciano intendere, quando il pittore non le voglia stroppiare, da tutte le nazioni e da tutti gli intelletti, senza altro pedagogo o interprete. Si aggiunge che, con brevità grandissima, anzi in un momento, o più tosto in uno sguardo, fanno capaci subito le persone; dove nei libri provano gli eruditi quanto tempo et oglio vi si consuma per intenderli." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 221.

Paleotti may consciously have sought to admit some degree of ambiguity in his treatment of images, since he finds that images are not only like Scripture, but also like sermons on Scripture.[62] Paleotti writes that painters were in one sense like the authors of sacred Scripture and in another sense, like commentators on Scripture. "Beyond the effects already considered," Paleotti writes that

> there is another noteworthy and important effect that is derived from Christian paintings, that of persuading the public, as in the case of an orator. By the medium of pictures, the public can be convinced to adhere to an aspect of religion, beyond the fact, [that we have] already underlined, that painting for the public has the same function that books have.[63]

Thus, in addition to being a visual representation of the Bible, images must also persuade as orators do. By positing this double quality, Paleotti articulates a theory for how images should be treated differently from written signs. If paintings should be thought of as Scripture translated into images, then, like a diligent translator, the painter must try to make those words easily readable in their new language. In writing this, Paleotti was clearly influenced by Augustine's principles on the interpretation of Scripture. Augustine, like Cicero, writes that "the eloquent should speak in such a way as to instruct, delight, and move their listeners."[64] Similarly, Paleotti borrows this formula from Augustine and applies it to painters, instructing that painters should complete their images "in such a way that it can procure delight, teach and move the emotion of he who looks at it."[65] Paleotti thus distinguishes between

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62 The comparison of painters to orators has been well noted in scholarly literature. See Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica dell arti figurative*, 37; Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius*, 135–136; Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*; Jones, "Art Theory as Ideology." On the relationship between painting, oration and memory also see Lina Bolzoni, "Il modello della macchina e il fascino dell'immagine nella retorica sacra post-tridentina," in *L'umana compagnia: Studi in onore di Gennaro Savarese*, ed. Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli (Rome: Bulzoni, 1999), 78–82.

63 "Oltre le cose dette di sopra, vi è un altro effetto che deriva dalle cristiane pitture, molto notabile e prencipale, il qual a guisa degli oratori è dirizzato al persuadere il popolo e tirarlo col mezzo della pittura ad abbracciare alcuna cosa pertinente alla religione." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 214.

64 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 4.12.27. "dixit ergo quidam eloquens, et verum dixit, ita dicere debere eloquentem, 'ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat.' " Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0101).

65 "Parimente dunque ufficio del pittore sarà usare li stessi mezzi nella sua opera, faticandosi per formarla di maniera, che ella sia atta a dare diletto, ad insegnare e movere l'affetto

the subject matter itself and the way it is represented, a fact noted earlier in his discussion of the various ways in which images could produce thoughts within the viewer:

> Similarly, therefore, the painter, inasmuch as he is like a writer, it will be said that his duty is that of forming a picture in such a way that it is able to produce the end that is attended of a sacred image. And this end, even if it is always one, which is that of persuasion, nonetheless, according to the different subjects that are in hand, can regard different things. As in fact, the orator, inasmuch as his principle aim is that of persuading his listeners and pulling them to his opinion, such persuasion will be from time to time directed towards war, peace, to punish or to absolve . . . in the same way the goal of the painter could be different according to what he is painting.[66]

The painter thus operates at a distance from the subject itself, evaluating how to represent his subject according to the needs of the subject and the environment into which it is to be placed, a principle very much in line with Counter-Reformation concerns that sought to curb heresy and establish clear understanding of church doctrine. Based on this understanding—that the painter was half author, half orator—one is better placed to understand the restrictions Paleotti attached to the so-called universal language of images and, ultimately, how he believed that images could persuade viewers to ascend through visual material to celestial contemplation. More generally in what follows below, I aim to show how the concept of the image as half Scripture, half sermon shaped the advice given to artists by Paleotti and others on how to compose images.

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di chi la guarderà." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 215–216. Note that Paleotti's wording is closer to Augustine than to Cicero: "Where Augustine uses a word for 'instruct', Cicero uses one meaning 'prove', or demonstrate," see R.P.H. Green, introduction to *On Christian Teaching*, by Augustine, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 159n117. Cicero's belief that eloquence should prove, delight and move is elsewhere related to Renaissance art theory; see for example Spencer, "Ut Rhetorica Pictura."

66 "Parimente dunque nel pittore, quanto al proposito in che conviene con lo scrittore, si dirà che l'ufficio suo sarà di formare la pittura in modo che sia atta a partorire il fine che dalle sacre imagini si aspetta. E questo fine, se bene sempre è uno, che è di persuadere, nondimeno, secondo varii soggetti che si hanno alle mani, può riguardare diverse cose; sì come l'oratore, se bene ha per iscopo di persuadere gli auditori e tirarli nella opinione sua, questa persuasione però sarà dirizzata ora alla guerra, ora alla pace, ora al punire o all'assolvere o al premiare alcuno, o a cose simili." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 215.

Through this exploration of Paleotti's theories of images, we see some of the tensions that exist between images and the traditions of contemplation, scriptural study, and sacred oratory. The remainder of this chapter explores the advice given to painters on the composition of sacred narratives, showing how it relates to these three devotional contexts. Although Paleotti returns as a focus toward the end of this chapter, in the following section I discuss image composition in the writings of other authors in order to demonstrate how the attitudes around invention that shape Paleotti's views arise more broadly in Renaissance writings on art.

Rhetoric, Reading and Remembering in Pictorial Invention

In order to picture sacred history, the artist was to use his or her faculty of "invention." Alberti explicitly relates invention to history painting by stating that "in preparing the composition of a *historia* . . . the great virtue of this consists primarily in its invention."[67] In the context of Renaissance art history, invention refers to something closely related to, but not identical with, the subject matter of a work of art. For example, Ludovico Dolce writes that "the invention is the fable or *historia* that the painter elects for himself [to paint] or is placed before him by another."[68] However, besides denoting the subject of a painting, the word "invention" pertains to the mental process of creating a composition depicting that subject, as is evident when Vasari writes that "invention [is] the true mother of architecture, of painting and of poetry . . . for it pleases craftsmen much and displays the whims and the caprices of fanciful brains that find the variety of things."[69] Even though elsewhere Vasari refers to inventions as simply topics or subjects within a painting, in this definition invention is a mental process from which art is born.[70] This section will look at

67 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.53. "ad historiae compositionem pulchre constituendam iuvabunt, quae omnis laus praesertim in inventione consistit." "componere l'istoria, di cui ogni laude consiste in la invenzione." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.53.

68 "La inventione è la favola, o historia, che'l Pittore si elegge da lui stesso, o gli è posta inanzi da altri per materia di quello, che ha da operare." Dolce, *Dialogo*, 116–117.

69 "la invenzione, Madre verissima dell'Architettura, della pittura, e della poesia; . . . perioche ella gradisce gl'artefici molto, e di loro mostra i ghiribizzi, e i capricci de' fantastichi cervelli, che truovano la varieta delle cose." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 222. Likewise, Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 36, notes that in Benedetto Varchi's writings, *invenzione, modello*, and *concetto* were all words used to mean a 'mental image'.

70 "le sue pitture son piene d'invenzioni cosi fatte." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 372. Alpers, "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes," 205–206, is among those to suggest that invention is simply the topic or subject matter of the painting.

some of the pre-histories of the word *invenzione*, scrutinizing some of the spiritual problems embedded within the process of image composition. Although invention in art was not exclusively a spiritual exercise, Christian attitudes toward composition can be fruitfully explored by examining the relationship between invention and reason in the Christian tradition. Reason here, naturally, refers to the quality of the human mind that, in Christian philosophy, was thought to be closest to God: the Word of God present in the human soul.[71] This section considers the rationality or reasonableness of invention. The closeness between reason and invention is already apparent in Alberti, when he writes that composition "is that reason of painting (*ragione di dipignere*) whereby the parts are composed together"; the virtue of a composition, Alberti later states, consists "primarily in its invention."[72] In passing, it is worth noting that according to a long tradition, the composition of images was regarded as a quality of reason. For example, the medieval scholastic theologian, Hugh of St. Victor, contrasted the rational mind of man to the minds of animals, noting that animals use images in their minds "in a confused and unclear manner, so that they can achieve nothing from joining or composing them."[73] The forming of mental images was a quality through which man brought him- or herself closer to reason.[74]

The word "invention" has a long history of being used to describe creative practices, dating to antiquity, and so it is natural that Alberti aligns composition and invention. Given Alberti's copious quotations from ancient rhetoric,

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71 In addition to earlier chapters of this study, see Gilson, *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, chapter 7, particularly, 137. "That is why, in Augustine's doctrine, every true judgment supposes a natural illumination of the mind by God . . . Virtues are stable habits of well doing, and, as such, they are based on true judgments of the reason."

72 Alberti, *On Painting*, 2.33, 3.53. "Est autem compositio ea pingendi ratio qua partes in opus picturae componuntur." "Neque parum illi quidem multarum rerum notitia copiosi litterati ad historiae compositionem pulchre constituendam iuvabunt, quae omnis laus praesertim in inventione consistit." "Composizione è quella ragione di dipignere con la quale le parti delle cose vedute si pongono insieme in pittura." "molto gioveranno a bello componere l'istoria, di cui ogni laude consiste in la invenzione." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 2.33.

73 Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1.3. "Sed eas imaginationes confusas atque inevidentes sumunt, ut nihil ex earum conjunctione ac compositione efficere possint." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 1.3 (Migne, *PL* 176.0743).

74 Hugh of St. Victor's ideas were still relevant to sixteenth-century art theorists; Federico Zuccaro, for instance, contrasted man's ability to assess images with the abilities of animals. See Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 139.

historians have interpreted Alberti's "invention" in terms of the classical tradition.[75] In *De inventione*, for instance, Cicero defines invention as "the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible."[76] In this instance, invention is the process of forming and then presenting an argument to be used in a public oration. In rhetoric, as is often noted, invention was an excogitative process in which an argument was not wholly "new" (as per the modern meaning of the word "invention") but rather found or discovered in pre-existing material.[77]

In addition to the classical tradition, medieval Christian perspectives on invention also shed light on art theory. Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*, noted above as a source for Paleotti's *Discorso*, brought invention from the sphere of rhetoric and into the domain of hermeneutics, or Christian biblical exegesis.[78] Since Christian preaching was primarily the explication of the Bible to the public, invention in Christian oratory became the process of discovering one's argument concerning a biblical passage. Hence, invention became an act of interpretation or exegesis, taken from rhetoric and brought to hermeneutics. Augustine writes that "there are two things on which all interpretation of Scripture depends: the process of inventing what we need to learn and the process of presenting what we have learnt."[79] By this Augustine meant that any interpreter of the Bible must discover what Scripture means and then preach the word of God, thus synthesizing scholarship on the Bible and preaching of the Bible into one unified discipline (for which reason the last book of his *De doctrina Christiana* is a discussion of the principles of oration). Reading, hence, became an act of invention.

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75 On classical rhetoric in Alberti, see Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 340–350.

76 Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.7.9. "partes autem eae quas plerique dixerunt, inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, pronuntiatio. Inventio est excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similium quae causam probabilem reddant."

77 See Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, 62–67.

78 See Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 151–158. Also see Gerald Press, "The Subject and Structure of Augustine's 'De doctrina christiana,'" *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980). On the continued importance of exegesis in medieval preaching see Harry Caplan, "The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching," *Speculum* 4 (1929), and Harry Caplan, "Rhetorical Invention in Some Medieval Tractates on Preaching."

79 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.1.1, translation modified. "Duae sunt res quibus nititur omnis tractatio Scripturarum; modus inveniendi quae intelligenda sunt, et modus proferendi quae intellecta sunt." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0019).

Though Augustine's appropriation of invention from rhetoric to hermeneutics was to have little impact on medieval rhetoric, it did have an impact on the rhetorical poetics or *artes poetriae* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[80] In the *artes poetriae*, following Augustine's translation of invention from rhetoric to hermeneutics, invention became the poetic art of taking known material and making one's own poetic work from it. As Rita Copeland has observed, "in [many medieval treatises on poetics] invention itself becomes in large part a grammatical category: the burden on invention is shifted onto amplification and variation of *materia* that has previously been realized in some kind of linguistic form."[81] Therefore, poetic invention was to take material previously known and to reinterpret it—to amplify and vary it—just as, for Augustine, invention was to take given scriptural material and discover meaning within it. This poetic process can be perceived in the quotation from Vasari, cited above, when he writes that invention "displays [the] fantasies and the caprices of fanciful brains that find the variety of things." Like poets who seek to amplify material, therefore, Vasari's invention is a process of seeking to vary a given topic. When invention was brought from medieval poetics to the Renaissance literature on art it was likewise a way of rereading material, amplifying and adorning it and discovering its meaning. However, since invention became once again, in the literature on art, applied to biblical material, it regained—intentionally or not—some of the spiritual meanings it had acquired in Augustine's rhetoric.

These pre-histories presume that invention is a process that occurs within the mind: the Roman orator invents his argument by arranging topics in his mind, the Augustinian preacher discovers the meaning of the Bible by contemplating Scripture, and the medieval poet amplifies material within his mind. The internal, contemplative implications of invention are highlighted by Augustine in *De Trinitate*, where he explains how the process of invention implies returning to the mind in order to find what is already known through the grace of God. He argues that all things that men find are known first in the mind through the rational faculty by which men lean upon God's Ideas. He proposes an etymology of the word "invention," stating that

> if we also trace back the origin of the word "invention," what else does it mean, than that to invent is to come [*venio*] into [*in*] that which is

80 See Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 159.

81 Ibid., 166. Also see P. Bagni, "L'inventione nell'ars poetica Latino-medievale," in *Rhetoric Revalued: Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric*, ed. Brian Vickers (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982).

> sought? . . . so [the mind] finds other things which it must know, not through the medium of any bodily sense, but through itself when it comes into them; it finds them either in a higher substance, that is, in God, or of the other parts of the soul; just as it does when it judges of bodily images themselves, for it finds these within, in the soul, impressed through the body.[82]

For Augustine, therefore, invention was the process of the mind "coming into" itself, of finding within itself that for which it was searching.[83] To look for something, man had to have some knowledge of it, and that knowledge was given to him by God. Although it is true that invention may involve simply using those phantasms that have been impressed upon the mind by sense objects, the rightness of these inventions was judged through God, as discussed in chapter three. Although Renaissance writers on art would probably not have ascribed the same spiritual meaning to invention that Augustine did (Paleotti's familiarity with Augustine, however, might make him an exception), invention clearly continues to imply coming into oneself. Just as Alberti continuously counseled artists to detach themselves from the curious love of matter, invention was a task characterized by a detachment from exterior stimuli, an interior meditation.

In a chapter of his *Trattato* aptly titled "composition of the form in the idea [i.e. the mind]," Lomazzo offers some thoughts on the creation of inventions.[84] It is important, Lomazzo stresses, that inventions be formed in the mind of the painter: "I will always praise he who, before he goes to work, looks first to

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82 Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 10.7.10. "aut quid tam menti adest, quam ipsa mens? Unde et ipsa quae appellatur invention, si verbi originem retractemus, quid aliud resonat, nisi quia invenire est in id venire quod quaritur? . . . Quapropter, sicut ea quae oculis aut ullo alio corporis sensu requiruntur, ipsa mens quaerit (ipsa enim etiam sensum carnis intendit, tunc autem inventi, cum in ea quae requiruntur idem sensus venit): sic alia quae non corporeo sensu internuntio, sed per se ipsam nosse debet, cum in ea venit, inventi; aut in superiore substantia, id est in Deo, aut in caeteris animae partibus, sicut de ipsis imaginibus corporum cum judicat; intus enim in anima eas inventi per corpus impressas." Augustine, *De Trinitate* (Migne, *PL* 042.0979).

83 A philological interpretation of this passage would require a comprehensive understanding of Augustine's doctrine of illumination, to which this passage clearly pertains. In the absence of a scholarly consensus on this matter, a vulgarization of this passage is all that may be offered here, which, for the purposes of this study, will suffice.

84 "Sesto—Cap. lxiiii. Compositone delle forme nella idea." Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura*, 481.

see in his idea all that he wishes to do."[85] When Lomazzo writes that composing images in the idea "must always be done in solitude and in silence, without which it is not possible ever to speculate well," the process of composing images evokes contemplative isolation.[86] Lomazzo also states that by returning into itself to compose an image, the mind must leave the world of sense, which confuses and distracts it. This theme is finally made most clear when Lomazzo writes that good compositions cannot be made by the painter who "interrupts cognition for the eyes from which he sees."[87]

> And it is certain that to them who imagine subtle things, it seems that not seeing and not sensing [hearing] brings them help, not sensing offence from the incommodious objects that are brought [to them] by [means of] the eyes, nor the sounds that are brought [to them] by ears. Therefore, all the valiant painters, as was said at the beginning, have done this: that is, to form first all the things that they wanted to make in their idea; and to do this more easily it is necessary to flee from the uproar, especially occasions to see. Because there is nothing that more pulls man away from his intention and does not leave him to stay collected in himself than objects. Whence we see that those who amidst uproar (*strepiti*) and sounds stay [still] with their stylus, and vexed [in their minds] with the pen over the page, up until the end they cannot find the invention of anything that they wish to make, as they also miss [the ability] to give motion, as it were, to the figures imagined.[88]

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85 "Però loderò sempre colui, il qual prima che si accinga all'opera cerca prima di veder nellidea tutto quello che vuol fare." Ibid., 482.

86 "La qual cosa primieramente si hà da fare di continouo in solitudine & silentio, senza che non è possibile che alcuno possa bene specular giamai." Ibid., 481.

87 "interrompe la cognitione per gl'occhi onde si vede." Ibid., 482.

88 "Et è certo che à coloro che sottili cose imaginano, pare che'l non vedere, & sentire gl'apporti aiuto, non sentendosi offendere da gl'incomodi che gl'occhi per gl'oggetti, & l'orecchie per li suoni apportano. Quindi tutti i valenti pittori come dissi da principio, hanno havuto questo, di formar prima tute le cose che volevano fare nella loro idea; per cui più facilmente fare è necssario ad ogni modo fugir gli strepiti, massimi l'occasioni di vedere; perche non vi è cosa che più tragga l'huomo fuor di proposito & non lo lasci stare in se raccolto, de gl'oggetti. Onde vediamo che quelli che trà romori & strepiti stanno con lo stille, e con la pena tempestando sopra le carte, all'ultimo non possono trovar inventione dl'alcuna cosa che vogliono fare, ne manco dar moto come si dice alle figure imaginate." Ibid., 482–483.

Sense distractions, therefore, inhibit the artist from "coming into" her- or himself, both in the sense that the artist cannot recollect himself in his mind nor can he invent, i.e., come into his material.[89] This passage also recalls Alberti's *Profugiorum ad aerumna libri*, in which invention was such a powerful process that it made all the distractions of the world go away, as when Archimedes was not bothered by the sounds of war whilst he was making his mathematical calculations.[90] In both of these passages the guiding principle is that invention is an interior process that requires detachment from sense objects: in Alberti invention is so powerful that it makes sense perception go away, whereas for Lomazzo invention needs to be done in silence so as to avoid sense distractions. Lomazzo's writings here may be taken as a confirmation of many of the principles that in the second chapter of this study were perceived in Alberti's *De pictura*: though clearly the study of nature was believed to be an important practice for Lomazzo (indeed, most of his lengthy book is dedicated to the investigation of physical appearance) ultimately in order to find what one is searching for, the painter has to turn away from sense perception and listen to interior judgment.

Lomazzo's position presumes that to invent, one needs to have material in one's mind with which to be inventive. The medieval scholar Mary Carruthers has remarked that "the Latin word *inventio* gave rise to two separate words in modern English[:] . . . invention . . . and inventory."[91] Therefore, historically, invention partook in both of these meanings and this assumes "that one cannot create ('invent') without a memory store ('inventory') to invent from and with."[92] Memory, therefore, was of fundamental importance to poetic and rhetorical composition. As will be seen, memory was also an aspect of pictorial invention.

Memory is valued highly in the Renaissance literature of art.[93] Leonardo's memory, for example, is singled out for praise by Vasari. He writes that Leonardo's *ingegno* was filled with "so much grace from God, and . . . accorded

89 On distraction, *strepiti* (the word used by Lomazzo, above) and meditative reading, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 214.

90 See chapter 2.

91 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 11.

92 Ibid., 11–12.

93 On Vasari's memory, see Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), chapter 3. On memory in the art theory of Federico Zuccaro, see Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 139.

with an intellect and memory that served it, and with the *disegno* of his hands he knew how to express his conceptions so well, that with his reasonings he was victorious, and with reason he confounded every steadfast *ingegno*.[94] Here, Vasari appears to conflate Leonardo's ability in draughtsmanship with his ability to debate, suggesting perhaps that in painting as in rhetoric, memory serves one's inventions. Likewise, in his summation of Michelangelo's life, memory figures prominently. Michelangelo, having a "tenacious and profound" memory, was able to remember the works of others easily and "serve himself of them in a manner that almost no one has become aware of it."[95] Therefore, in order to invent, one has to be able to call upon an inventory of images.

Drawing, for Vasari, was a practice that left the qualities of that which had been drawn in the memory of the artist. Vasari conveys this idea with an ancient metaphor of the memory as a wax tablet that remembers impressions drawn or written onto it. Just as wax tablets were once used for writing upon, memory is the wax of the mind that retains what has been drawn upon it.[96] Andrea del Sarto's pictures of women always looked like his wife "for having continuously seen her and for having drawn her so much and what's more, having her impressed in his soul, it came about that almost all the heads of women that he made resemble her."[97] It was the double action of drawing her and having her "impressed in his soul" (presumably a reference to his love for his wife) that brought about her appearance in his drawings. Likewise Antonio Mini, a pupil of Michelangelo's, did not become a great artist because he "did not have an apt brain, and when the wax is hard, it cannot receive an impression well."[98] On the other hand, those with very able memories did not need to draw as much as others, as was the case for Cristofano Gherardi, who only

94 "& era in quello ingegno infuso tanta grazia da Dio, & una demostratione si terribile accordata con l'intelletto & memoria, che lo serviva, & col disegno delle mani sapeva si bene esprimere il suo concetto: che con i ragionamenti vinceva, & con le ragioni confondeva ogni gagliardo ingegno." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 2.

95 "E stato Michelagnolo di una tenace, & profonda memoria, che nel vedere le cose altrui una sol volta l'ha ritenute si fattamente, & servitosene in una maniera, che nessuno se n'è mai quasi accorto: ne ha mai fatto cosa nessuna delle sue, che riscontri l'una con l'altra, perche si ricordava di tutto quelle che aveva fatto." Ibid., 3: 778.

96 For a discussion of this tradition, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, chapter 1, at 18, where the memory as wax tablet is called the "cognitive archetype" of memory.

97 "percioche non faceva aria di femine in nessun luogo, che da lei non la ritraesse: se pur aveniva, che da altre talora la togliesse, per l'uso del continuo vederla, e per tanto haverla disegnata, & che è piu; haverla nell'animo impressa, veniva, che quasi tutte teste, che faceva di feminine, la somigliavano." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 158.

98 "non hebbe il cervello atto, & quando la cera è dura non s'imprime bene." Ibid., 3: 776.

drew when he needed to create a finished painting, since his "practice, judgment and memory" allowed him to "conduct [his works] without any other study, such that he surpassed many who in truth knew more than him."[99] In the same way that drawing puts images into one's memory, drawing has the ability to tease them out. One artist, for example, after having not drawn for some time, upon returning to it "went acquiring so much from day to day, that he . . . [awoke] in himself what had been forgotten."[100]

Titian is criticized by Michelangelo, in Vasari's account, for not being able to draw without the model in front of him, thus ignoring Lomazzo's stipulation that designs must be made without sense distraction.[101] He writes that "he who has not drawn enough, and studied select antique or modern things, cannot practice well on his own [i.e.: from memory], nor ameliorate the things he draws from life," thus forging a relationship between drawing and memory.[102] A passage from the introduction to Titian's *vita* further confirms the threefold relationship between drawing, memory and invention. The value of having images in one's memory was both that one had an inventory with which to invent, but also that one's attention would be free to invent whilst drawing. Vasari writes that it is necessary to study the nude

> if you wish to understand it well, which will not happen, nor can it, without putting [it] on paper; . . . when the hand has been by drawing on paper, then little by little and with more ease it is able to create work, designing and painting together . . . Not to mention that by drawing on paper, the mind is filled with beautiful conceptions, and one learns to make by memory (*fare a mente*) all the objects of nature, without having to keep them always before you or being obliged to conceal beneath the beauty of colors.[103]

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99 "veggendosi, che la pratica, il giudizio, e la memoria gli facevano in modo condurre le cose senza altro studio, che egli superava molti, che in vero ne sapevano piu di lui." Ibid., 3: 467.

100 "e cosi non lasciando mai di praticare col maestro, andò tanto di gionro in giorno acquistando, che non solo si risvegliarono in lui le cose dimenticate." Ibid., 2: 256.

101 Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy*, 89–90, deals with this passage, and recognizes the importance of memory, but sees it only as a way to draw without a model, and not as a means of producing inventions.

102 "chi non ha disegnato assai, e studiato cose scelte antiche, o moderne, non puo fare bene di pratica da se, ne aiutare le cose che si ritranno dal vivo, dando loro quelle grazia, e perfezzione, che dà l'arte, fuori dell'ordine della natura, laquale fa ordinariamente alcune parti che non son belle." Vasari, *Vite*, 3: 813.

103 "senza che pur bisogna fare grande studio sopra gl'ignudi, a volergli intendere bene, ilche non vien fatto, ne si puo senza mettere in carta. Et il tenere sempre, che altri colorisce

Drawing from nature, or "forming one's hand," thus permits the artist to turn away from the model during the process of invention and painting: the artist relies on the memory of the hand whilst inventing and drawing at the same time. This recalls Alberti's *De pictura*, in which he writes that the hand should "echo nature," implying that the memory of things drawn will reside partly in the memory of the hand, thereby freeing the mind for the higher process of invention.[104] Vasari also criticizes Titian for insufficiently understanding the process of invention, noting that in order to "accommodate inventions well," artists should first put their compositions "on paper in several different ways, to see how it all goes together, since the mind (*idea*) cannot see, nor imagine the invention perfectly in itself."[105] Thus, drawing is an important step in the process of seeking out invention: it is a process that begins in the mind and then is perfected by the hand.[106] In his discussion of invention in *De' veri precetti della pittura*, Giovanni Battista Armenini also emphasizes the importance of drawing, which, he writes, "awakens the mind" so as to help it seek out its invention and also "keeps fresh the memory and the remembrance of things seen."[107] For Armenini, thus, drawing while inventing is a way of coming back into the mind.

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persone ignude innanzi, o vero vestite, è non piccola servitu, la dove quando altri ha fatto la mano, disegnando in carta, si vien poi di mano in mano, con piu agevolezza a mettere in opera disegnando, e dipignendo. E cosi facendo pratica nell'arte, si fa la maniera, & il giudizio perfetto, levando via quella fatica, e stento, con che si conducono le pitture, di cui si è ragionato dispora. Per non dir nulla, che disegnando in carta, si viene a empiere la mente di bei concetti, e s'impara a fare a mente tutte le cose della natura; senza havere a tenerle sempre innanzi, o ad havere a nascere sotto la vaghezza de' colori." Ibid., 3: 806.

104 See chapter 2. Note also that Leclerq, *Love of Learning*, 72–73, has described a similar "memory of the body" with regard to reading in the monastic tradition. Also see Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*, chapter 7.

105 "Ma non s'accorgeva, che egli è necessario a chi vuol bene disporre i componimenti, & accomodare l'invenzioni, che'fa bisogno prima in più modi diferenti porle in carta, per vedere come il tutto torna insieme. Conciosia che l'idea non puo vedere, ne imaginare perfettamente in se stessa l'invenzioni, se non apre, e non mostra il suo concetto a gl'occhi corporali, che l'aiutino a farne buon giudizio." Vasari, *Vite*, 3: 806.

106 On drawing as a way of finding inventions, see Ernst H. Gombrich, "Leonardo's Method for Working out Compositions," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the art of the Renaissance*, 3rd ed. (London: Phaidon, 1978), 58–63. Also see Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," *Viator* 8 (1977), 376–384, regarding Leonardo's use of *invenzione*.

107 Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, ed. and trans. Edward J. Olszewski (New York: B. Franklin, 1977), 145. "che si sveglia la mente tuttavia con diversi schizzi sù le carte'. 'oltre che ci è manifesto quanto cosi si tien viva la memoria,

> at times it is well to draw many sketches, each different from the first . . . for one concentrates one's attention more when drawing anew . . . In this process the intellect is enhanced and polished, since the hand, minister of the intellect, sharpens the understanding.[108]

Throughout Vasari's biographies, those artists who pay particular attention to drawing so as to fill their memories with an inventory of objects are those who are the most able in invention.[109] This is demonstrated in the lives of the painting companions Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino, who began their partnership in Rome, the city that Vasari repeatedly argues holds the greatest treasures for artists.[110] Vasari writes that they copied so many ancient objects that there remained "no vase, statue, . . . nor anything, broken or intact that they did not draw, and of which they did not serve themselves"; having always drawn together, it appeared that "their souls (*animi*) were of one same will" and that "their hands expressed the same knowledge."[111] The metaphor of the hand being servant to memory here again emphasizes how the hand feeds memory by drawing and, likewise, that the fruit it bears comes from the hand. By contrast, having no invention or having no inventory was a great detriment to one's art, as is demonstrated in the life of Guiliano Bugiardini who, having been commissioned by Palla Rucellai to execute an altarpiece of S. Catharine

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& delle cose vedute ricordevole, & è piu di tutto mirabile d'intorno alla prattica del la mano." Giovanni Battista Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna, 1589; facs. ed. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1971), 74.

108 Armenini, *True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, 144. "Conciosia cosa che con più attentione si dissegna di novo, che non si fa à rivedere solamente quella macchia, la onde l'intelletto più si abbellisce, & si lima, percioche la mano ministra dell'intelletto aiuta molto più l'ingegno." Armenini, *precetti della pittura*, 73.

109 Raphael is traditionally thought to be Vasari's inventor *par excellence*, though others are also given praise for invention. See, for example, Laura Riccò, *Vasari Scrittore: La Prima Edizione Del Libro Delle Vite* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979), 999–100; Jean Rouchette, *La Renaissance que nous a léguée Vasari* (Paris: Société d'Edition "Les Belles Lettres," 1959), 109, and also Alpers, "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes," 207.

110 See Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, 122, for a discussion of the drawings Vasari did of Rome from memory.

111 "La onde inanimiti di ciò cominciarono sì a studiare le cose dell'antichità di Roma, ch'eglino contraffacendo le cose di marmo antiche, ne'chiari & scuri loro, non restò vaso, statue, pili, storie ne cosa intera ò rotta, ch'eglino non disegnassero, & di quella non si servissero. Et tanto con frequentazione, & voglia, a tal cosa posero il pensiero, che unitamente presero la maniera antica, & tanto l'una simile all'altra, che si come gl'animi loro erano d'uno istesso volere; cosi le mani ancora esprimevano il medesimo sapere." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 198.

the Virgin for S. Maria Novella, was unable to complete it due to his lack of invention. Vasari writes that Giulian "kept it in his hands for twelve years," never finishing it "for not having [any] invention, nor knowing how to make so many of the varied things that appear in that martyrdom," though he would continue to change his composition from day to day.[112]

A rich visual inventory was therefore required in order to vary and amplify topical material. Though typically amplification and invention have been viewed in art historical literature as descending from poetics and rhetoric, as will become clear below, it is also important to consider pictorial invention with respect to biblical exegesis and Christian rhetoric, since, as noted above, Augustine translated rhetorical invention to these fields of inquiry. Though we can still perceive how invention is an interior process in the writings of secular writers, bearing some similarity to the "coming into" described by Augustine, the more blatantly spiritual dimensions of invention will be observed below, returning to the writings of Paleotti and other Counter-Reformation writers.

The Circumstances of Sacred History

To have many different things in one's inventory helped pictorial invention in the matter of amplifying and adorning a text; however, the contents of an artist's inventory needed to be yoked together with the given story in an appropriate way.[113] For history to be amplified effectively, the material that was to be invented was subject to several questions known in Roman rhetoric as the "circumstances" (*circumstantiae*). These questions, which had been employed to help orators discover their argument about a given topic, directed the mind to consider the material from various points of view, asking who, what, why, where, etc.[114] Though the circumstances did not originate with Cicero, he uses them in *De inventione*, writing, for example, that when considering the proof

112 "la tenne dodici anni fra mano, ne mai la condusse in detto tempo à fine, per non havere invenzione, ne sapere come farsi le tante varie cose, che in quel martirio intervenivono . . . tuttavia mutando quello, che un giorno haveva fatto l'altro, in tanto tempo non le diede mai fine." Ibid., 3: 455.

113 The appropriateness of invention in art is normally discussed as pertaining to artistic decorum, a concept believed to have been inherited from classical rhetoric. Although, as discussed below, I believe classical rhetoric remains an important source, I also aim to outline some spiritual dimensions to decorum. See Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, chapter 2.

114 See Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, chapter 3.

of an oration, one may form "a brief summary of the whole action comprising the sum of the matter . . . Then inquiry is made as to the reason for this whole matter, i.e., by what means, and why, and for what purpose."[115] Cicero also writes that "in connection with the performance of the act . . . inquiry will be made about place, time, occasion, manner and facilities."[116] Through the influence of Cicero, many later rhetoricians used the circumstances.[117]

The circumstances had a long history in the Middle Ages during which time they were applied to hermeneutics and poetics.[118] In texts on poetics the circumstances were used so that poets could intelligently consider the material they were inventing/interpreting.[119] In hermeneutics, on the other hand, the circumstances were used to guide the reading and interpretation of a given text, sacred or secular. For example, the circumstances are used by Hugh of St. Victor in his *Didascalicon*, an important book on the process of biblical exegesis, when he counsels students of Scripture to read the Bible carefully, recommending that they pay particular attention to the historical, or literal meaning of the text, i.e., the historical narrative told in the Bible.

> First you learn history and diligently commit to memory the truth of the deeds that have been performed, reviewing from beginning to end what has been done, when it has been done, where it has been done, and by whom it has been done. For these are the four things which are especially to be sought for in history—the person, the business done, the time, and the place. Nor do I think that you will be able to become perfectly sensitive to allegory unless you have first been grounded in history.[120]

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115 Cicero, *De inventione*, 1.26.37. "Ex his prima est brevis complexio totius negoti quae summam continet facti, hoc modo . . . deinde causa eius summae per quam et quam ob rem et cuius rei causa factum sit quaeritur."

116 Ibid., 1.26.38. "In gestione autem negoti, qui locus secundus erat de eis quae negotiis attributa sunt, quaeretur locus, tempus, occasio, modus, facultas."

117 See Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutic, and Translation in the Middle Ages*, 68.

118 Ibid., 66.

119 Ibid., 162–163. Copeland gives the example of John of Garland's *Parisiana poetira*, which discusses how to write poetry. In this text the circumstances are used "to describe the process of writing itself," 163.

120 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3. "Haec enim quatuor praecipue, et in historia requirenda sunt, persona, negotium, tempus et locus. Neque ego te perfecte subtilem posse fieri puto in allegoria, nisi prius fundatus fueris in historia." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* (Migne, *PL* 176.0799).

The circumstances thus help the reader to establish the historical meaning of Scripture, which becomes the foundation for further "allegorical" interpretations of the text (discussed in greater depth in the following section). Therefore, following Augustine's translation of invention from rhetoric to hermeneutics, Hugh takes the circumstances from the domain of rhetoric and uses them as a way of reading a sacred text.[121]

Although the circumstances in art theory have been discussed by art historians in relationship to moral philosophy as well as rhetoric, given that invention in art was thought to be the presentation of, or a reading of, the text, I argue that it is also appropriate to discuss how the circumstances influenced the literature on art as principles of reading.[122] For example, a sustained discussion on pictorial invention in the Renaissance occurs in a text that has mostly been discussed as a witness to Venetian taste: Dolce's *Dialogo*, in which many conventions of literary invention are observed. Dolce posits that invention is the "fable or the *historia* that the painter elects himself or is placed before him by others as the material with which he has to work."[123] Besides simply being the subject matter for a painting, Dolce notes that invention "comes from two parts: from the *historia* and from the *ingegno* of the painter . . . beyond the order and propriety, from the *ingegno* comes the attitudes, the variety and . . . the energy of the figures."[124] Invention is thus both the subject matter and the process of bringing a story to life; when inventing, the painter must consider "many parts, amongst which the principal [ones] are order and propriety (*convenevolezza*)."[125] Therefore, Dolce describes painterly invention as the varying of figures appropriately within a historical composition, a task, he writes, that is facilitated by the circumstances which direct the painter to consider "the qualities of people, [and] no less [their] nation, customs, places and times."[126] The circumstances

121 The circumstances in medieval biblical exegesis are touched upon by De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 77.

122 See Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 111–121.

123 "La invenzione è la favola, o istoria, che'l Pittore si elegge da lui stesso, o gli è posta inanzi da altri per materia di quello che had da operare." Dolce, *Dialogo*, 116.

124 "Per quello, che s'è detto, appare, che la inventione vien da due parti, dalla historia, e dall'ingegno del Pittore. Dalla istoria egli ha semplicemente la materia, e dall'ingegno, oltre all'ordine e la convenevolezza, procedono l'attitudini, la varietà, e la (per così dire) energia delle figure; ma questa è parte commune col disegno." Ibid., 128.

125 "E cominciando dalla inventione, in questa dico, che vi entrano molte parti: tra le quali sono le principali l'ordine e la convenevolezza." Ibid.

126 "Di qui terrà sempre riguardo alla qualità delle persone, ne meno alle nationi, a costumi, a luoghi, & a tempi." Ibid.

thus appear in Dolce's text as the means by which the personages that are to be painted may be contemplated.

Scholars of Dolce's work may be tempted to attribute the circumstances to Horace's *ars poetica*, for Dolce invokes his name on the matter of making the speech of one's characters conform to their office and station, writing that "wherefore it is well said by Horace that in a comedy it is of great importance who is speaking, be it the master or the servant."[127] Though Dolce may have felt that the best authority for his theory of painting was Horace, the actual advice he offers to painters bears more similarity to the use of the circumstances in medieval hermeneutics than it does to classical poetics. In the first place, Dolce is instructing painters how to interpret Scripture, not how to write a comedy. Horace recommends to poets that they "must mark the characteristics of each period of life and render with convincing appeal the volatility of nature and time."[128] Dolce, on the other hand, specifically uses the circumstance ("nation, customs, places and times") as the tools of historical interpretation. That the circumstances are being used for hermeneutical purposes is clear when he writes that order and *convenevolezza* are important because

> if the painter, to take an example, will have to paint Christ or St. Paul preaching, it would not be well that he make him nude, or to have him dressed as a soldier, or a mariner, but it is important that he considers the clothes that would be appropriate to one and the other; and principally to give Christ a grave effigy . . .[129]

Therefore the circumstances are important because they help one interpret Scripture or sacred narrative more faithfully. The circumstance of "time," in Dolce's hands, becomes a question of order, a way of ensuring that the sequence of narrative depicted in an image will be understood by the spectator. Order, Dolce writes, is necessary so that the artist does not "place that which should

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127 "Onde ben disse Horatio, che in una Comedia importa molto, che abbia a favellare il servo, o il padrone." Ibid., 118. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, considers Dolce's relationship to the classical rhetorical tradition, see 354–357.

128 Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, ed. David Armstrong, verse trans. Raffel Burton, prose trans. James Hynd (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 35, 49 (v. 154–157). "si plausoris eges aulaea manentis et usque sessuri donec cantor "vos plaudite" dicat, aetatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores, mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis."

129 "Percioche, se'l Pittore (per cagion di esempio) havrà a dipinger Christo, o San Paolo, che predichi, non istà bene che lo faccia ignudo, o lo vesti da soldato o da marinaio, ma bisogna, ch'e' consideri un'abito conveniente all'uno & all'altro: e principlamente di dare a Christo una effigie grave . . ." Dolce, *Dialogo*, 118.

be before afterwards nor that which should be afterwards placed before."[130] The coherence of time is then attributed to Aristotle's *Poetics*, though the question of time, as a process in exegetical invention, belongs more properly to the circumstances.[131] The "order of history," and the "sequence of events" were fundamental concerns of Biblical exegetes.[132] Similar to Dolce, the theologian Gilio da Fabriano criticizes artists who ignore the circumstances, writing that "ignorance is not knowing how to distinguish . . . times, modes, the age, the customs and other qualities that are convenient to the figures that one makes."[133] Knowing "the time, the place, [and] the persons" of the painted subject, he writes, will help artists to "discern the accidental features [that should be added to a *historia*, and those] that one should flee from."[134] Gilio is often discussed in light of the poetic tradition, and makes frequent citations of Horace in his text; however, these precepts also harmonize with the tradition of biblical exegesis, with which we can expect Gilio, a theologian, to have been familiar.[135] These points demonstrate not that Dolce and Gilio misunderstood Horace or Aristotle, but that they used them as authorities to defend concerns that were important to spiritual readings of texts during the Middle Ages, even if one cannot be sure that they directly inherited these concerns from their writings; it reveals how the theory of art was indebted to methods of reading—reading the Bible, in particular—that reframed pictorial invention as a hermeneutical process.

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130 "Ne ponga quello che ha ad essere inanzi, dapoi; ne quello c'ha ad essere dapoi, inanzi, disponendo ordinatissimamente le cose, nel modo che elle seguirono." Ibid., 120.

131 See Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, 355, who mentions that this, too, recalls Horace.

132 De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 77.

133 "da questa ignoranza nasce il non sapere distinguere il vero dal finto e dal favoloso, il poetico da l'istorico, i tempi, i modi, l'età, i costumi e l'altre qualità convenevoli a le figure che fanno." Gilio, *Dialogo*, 2: 15.

134 "saper discernere gli accidenti che si deono fuggire da quelli che si deono usare; . . . si deve informare del soggetto de l'istoria che egli dipingere disegna; dopo, del tempo, del luogo, de le persone." Ibid., 2: 26.

135 On Gilio and the humanist and poetic tradition, see Charles Dempsey, "Mythic Inventions in Counter-Reformation Painting," in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982). Scavizzi, *The Controversy on Images from Calvin to Baronius*, 93–99, and chapter 6, argues persuasively that Gilio dressed theological ideas in humanist language. Further bibliography includes Federico Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma: L'arte senza tempo di Scipione da Gaeta* (Turin: Einaudi, 1957), 26, who argues that Gilio was among the first to rate art according to its devotional quality, ignoring its artistic merits.

Perhaps the most sustained engagement with the circumstances is found in Paleotti's *Discorso*, in which it becomes clear that the circumstances are guidelines to help the painter to imagine sacred history correctly, thereby curbing mental habits that might reveal the impious inclinations of the painter's imagination or their ignorance.[136] In Paleotti's view, the circumstances circumscribe "actions," and, whilst a painting of an action may depict the act itself truthfully, the painter's view of the circumstances may be in error.[137] Thereby, Paleotti asserts that "it is necessary that every natural thing, human action or otherwise, is produced in time, place and method by a person, cause or with other particularity according to the condition and subject of these things," and therefore the painter can err in "each of these parts, separately or united together."[138] Paleotti further notes that, although the circumstances pertain "in some ways to the natural, in other [ways] to the moral, in other ways to rhetoricians or other disciplines," he will nonetheless "embrace" the material together "according to how it bears on painters," thus confirming the view outlined above that Paleotti draws upon a host of traditions to theorize images.[139]

Having posited that the circumstances circumscribe actions, Paleotti further distinguishes two different ways of applying the circumstances to sacred history: the first, as concerns things that are known and the second as concerns things about which sacred history makes no mention: therefore the circumstances will help artists to establish what is true about Scripture, and what is plausible. Concerning the first category, Paleotti notes for instance that it

136 Themes shared between Gilio and Paleotti are discussed by Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, and more recently Vincenzo Caputo, "Gli 'abusi' dei pittori e la 'norma' dei trattatisti: Giovanni Andrea Gilio e Gabriele Paleotti," *Studi rinascimentali* 6 (2008).

137 "L'altro capo è quando l'oggetto è vero, ma si figura falsamente; il che accade quando non si altera la sostanza o il fatto principale, ma solo si pervertiscono alcune particolarità e circonstanze di esso." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 360–361.

138 "Avendo dunque noi di sopra parlato quando il fatto o fondamento è falso, parliamo ora quando, essendo vero quello, le circonstanze sue nondiemo sono false: imperoché, essendo necessario che ogni cosa naturale, o azzione umana o altro, sia stata prodotta in tempo, luoco e modo, da persona, da causa o con altre particolarità, secondo la condizione e soggetto di essa, e potendo il pittore errare, oltre le altre cose, in ciascuna di queste parti, o separate o unite insieme." Ibid., 2: 361.

139 "Perché, se bene sappiamo che la considerazione d'alcuni di essi in un modo appertiene al naturale, in altro al morale, in altro al retore o altre discipline, nientedimeno il punto nostro non consiste ora in distinguere dottrinalemente queste materie, ma in abbracciarle insieme, secondo che torna a proposito del pittore, la cui arte versa in sapere bene rappresentare tutte le cose imitabili, siano naturali o artificiali o morali o intellettuali, o di qualonque sorte." Ibid., 2: 361–362.

would be incorrect to paint Goliath "of ordinary stature, since it is known that he was gigantic."[140] These types of errors simply reveal that the painter did not consider what is truthfully known about the story and thus qualify as a misreading of the text.

The situation is complicated, however, with respect to the qualities that are "verisimilar," or plausible, rather than simply correct or incorrect.[141] Paleotti writes that "implausible (*non verisimili*) pictures are different from false ones inasmuch as false pictures openly contradict truth, whilst implausible pictures do not reject things that are clear and certain, but rather what is most probable with respect to the entire thing or in some circumstance of it."[142] Here the painter's imagination and inventory is enlisted to amplify the Scriptural account:

> Therefore the painter, whose office is to imitate what is true, must principally have the eye on these circumstances, with which the body of truth is accompanied . . . and according to this to form his design. But because all of the happenings and order of things are not known, and infinite things have been passed over by writers, therefore, wanting to express those things that are not certain, one comes to that which is plausible. Therefore a plausible narration will be that which recounts (*spiegherà*) equally all the circumstances noted above, which accompany the truth.[143]

Earlier in his *Discorso*, Paleotti is clear that when amplifying the scriptural account, the painters must draw upon the traditions of contemplation and preaching. He writes that these imagined details are able to "move the heart and

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140 "Goliath di statura ordinaria, che pure si sa che era di forma gigantea." Ibid., 2: 362.

141 The questions of *verisimili* pictures is discussed also by Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, 1: 130. Whilst Boschloo's synthesis of Paleotti's points is very effective, I aim here to place Paleotti's ideas more broadly within spiritual discourse.

142 "Le pitture non verisimili sono differenti dalle false, in quanto che le false contradicono apertamente alla verità, queste non repugnano alle cose chiare e certe, ma a molta probabilità che occorre nel tutto o in alcuna circonstanzia di esso, onde si possono dire come di un grado inferiore a quelle." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 364.

143 "Onde il pittore, cui ufficio è di'imitare il vero, doverà precipuamente avere l'occhio a queste circonstanze, con le quali sta accompagnato il corpo della verità, procurando di chiarirsi bene di tutto il contenuto et ordine del fatto e secondo quello formare il disegno suo. Ma perché tutti i successi et ordini delle cose non si sanno, et infiniti sono tralasciati dagli autori, allora, volendosi esprimere quelle cose che non sono certe, si viene al verisimile. Laonde narrazione verisimile si dirà quella, la quale spiegherà medesimamente tutte le circostanze dette di sopra, le quali accompagnano il vero." Ibid., 2: 365.

to excite devotion, as we see when often contemplative people and preachers narrate many things in the Passion of Our Lord, which are not found written in the Evangelists . . . [which] move affection and soften the heart."[144] An example found in a later passage of Paleotti's *Discorso* confirms that the contemplative tradition is a source for Paleotti's reasoning: as an example of an embroidered scriptural account, Paleotti recalls that "there is no evangelist who says that when our Lord was crucified, that his *pudende* were covered by any cloth or veil, and nonetheless it is such a reasonable thing," and so much a part of the Christian tradition that putting it in doubt would be "almost an impiety."[145] As noted in chapter four, this story likely originates from the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, and therefore, when Paleotti uses this as an example of the kind of amplification artists ought to make, he is translating a meditative tradition to a pictorial practice.[146] Although often in scholarly literature Paleotti is characterized as an inflexible opponent to artistic creativity, a more sympathetic reading suggests that he is deeply attuned to the affective possibilities that artists may explore through careful interpretation of the Bible.

It is likewise appropriate to consider Paleotti's use of the circumstances with respect to Christian oratory.[147] The circumstances figured in the Catholic reform of preaching, as can be discerned in Agostino Valier's widely circulated treatise on preaching, *De rhetorica ecclesiastica*, written at the request of the

144 "È però d'avvertire che non ogni cosa incerta, narrata nondimeno o dipinta come certa, rende subito lo autore di essa temerario; perché ciò non ha luogo quando quello che si narra o dipinge è accompagnato da molta probabilità et insieme è atto a movere il cuore et eccitare divozione; sì come veggiamo che sogliono le persone contemplative e predicatori nella passione di Nostro Signore narrare molte cose che non si trovano scritte negli Evangelii: come dei lamenti della Madonna, dei prieghi lunghi fatti da N.S. nella orazione nell'orto, della acerbità de' flagelli, delle parole obbrobriose usateli da' Giudei, e simili altre cose che raccontano per muovere più l'affetto et intenerire il cuore." Ibid., 2: 272.

145 "Sì come, per essempio, non ci è evangelista che dica che, quando nostro Signore fu crocifisso, gli fossero coperte le parte pudende di alcun panno o velo, e nientedimeno è cosa tanto ragionevole e tanto frequentata già da tutti i secoli nella cristianità, che il volere mettere in dubbio questo pareria quasi una impietà." Ibid., 2: 287–288.

146 Christian Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie der frühen Neuzeit: Studien zu Traktaten von Johannes Molanus, Gabriele Paleotti und anderen Autoren* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2012), 314, discusses this passage in the context of Paleotti's recommendations regarding apocryphal texts.

147 In addition to my discussion of Agostino Valier here, see Steinemann's discussion of the circumstances as used by Luìs de Granada, *Eine Bildtheorie zwischen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, 117.

Bishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo.[148] As is well known, Borromeo was a close friend of Paleotti, and letters shared between the two sometimes discuss ideas about Christian preaching.[149] Valier's text is thus an appropriate witness to the spirit of reform in which Paleotti was immersed, particularly since, as Marc Fumaroli and John O'Malley have shown, such rhetorics were written with Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* in mind.[150] Valier's treatment of the circumstances is not lengthy, though he confirms that they can be used to enliven and amplify an orator's description of a personage.[151] Although the examples of amplification given by Valier do not apply the circumstances to Scripture, it has nonetheless been noted that Counter-Reformation rhetorical treatises privileged sermons on the historical sense of Scripture, and indeed studies of Paleotti's sermons indicate that he restricted himself as much as possible to literal interpretation.[152]

Paleotti further discusses the circumstances to address some errors that reveal what might be called the bad taste of the painter: certain impious imaginations that amplify what ought not to be visualized. Paleotti, for instance, objects to things "only imagined to cause tears and arouse the fervor of devotion, not having any regard to the decorum of the person or to the probability

148 On Valier's treatise, see Frederick McGinness, *Right Thinking and Sacred Oratory in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), chapter 2, particularly 50–51; Joseph Michael Connors, "Catholic Homiletic Theory in Historical Perspective" (PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), 92.

149 On Paleotti and preaching and Borromeo, see Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, chapter 9. On letters exchanged between Paleotti and Borromeo on preaching, see Massimo Marcocchi, ed., *La Riforma Cattolica: Documenti e testimonianze* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1967) 2: 96–103.

150 On Borromeo and preaching during the Counter-Reformation more generally, see Marc Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'eloquence: Rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980), chapter 3; O'Malley, "Content and Rhetorical Forms in Sixteenth-Century Treatises on Preaching," and by the same author "Form, Content and Influence of Works About Preaching Before Trent," in *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993).

151 "Locus verò ab Adiunctis, personarum & rerum attributa omnia penè comlectitur: sic describuntur Adiuncta, quae cum re sunt coniuncta, ut locus, tempus, vestitus, comitatus, apparatus, colloquia . . . Valebit ad rem illustrandam & amplificandam hic locus plurimùm." Agostino Valier, *De rhetorica ecclesiastica* (Milan, 1574), book 1, chapter 34, "Locus ab Adiunctis."

152 See Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, 2: 108; McGinness, *Right Thinking and Sacred Oratory*, 37.

and verisimilitude of the action."[153] In this, he writes many "err easily, moved by indiscrete zeal, not using required prudence."[154] Considering this passage in light of the discussion of ornament in chapter one, it may be suggested that details seeking indiscriminately to manipulate the viewer's spiritual reactions are equal to the visual ornaments that Michelangelo complained were used to evoke tears: both are accessories that shortcut the truth of history to stimulate spiritual responses. The persuasiveness of imagined details is acknowledged by Paleotti when he writes that "sometimes a lie resembles truth more than truth itself," recounting the story of an orator who "accompanied the things that he said always with so many circumstances of time and place and person and other minutiae, that it seemed to be truth, even though it was a lie."[155] Paleotti also describes additions to Scripture as novelties, as, for example, when one paints the flight from Egypt with the Virgin "with a vase in hand taking water from the river to give it to the child," or St. Joseph taking fruit from a tree in the same scene, and "many other similar examples, in which the intelligent painter should take care not to let himself be transported by curiosity nor by the desire to satisfy the appetite of every man, but rather to stay firm in the gravity and antiquity of the Holy Fathers."[156] In both of these examples it was not the historical inaccuracy of the invention, or ignorance of the circumstances, that is at fault, but rather the painter's curiosity. This suggests that the painter's invention of sacred history had to be governed by the same principles discussed in the earlier chapters of this book, namely the intention to seek God through the imagination: the artist had to imagine sacred history, always being careful to restrain curiosity or other inappropriate interests. An impious imagination would simply create unusual novelties, leading the minds

153 "cose solamente imaginate per far piangere e destare fervore di devozione, non avendosi riguardo alcuno al decoro della persona o alla probabilità e verisimilitudine del fatto." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 272.

154 "però che molti, mossi da zelo indiscreto, errano facilmente in questo, non vi usando la debita prudenza." Ibid.

155 "Onde disse quel savio, che alcuna volta la bugia s'assomgilia più alla verità, che la verità istessa; e scrive un orator greco d'uno che accompagnava le cose che diceva sempre con tante circonstanze e di luoghi e di tempi e di persone e di altre minuzie, che pareva la istessa verità, e pur era bugia." Ibid., 2: 370.

156 "overo quando si figura il misterio della Madonna allora che fuggì in Egitto, che con un vaso in mano piglia l'acqua del fiume per darne al figliuolo, e s. Gioseffo che piglia anch'egli un ramo carico de frutti da un arbore e lo porge al figliuolo, e molti altri esempii simili, ne' quali l'accorto pittore dovrà avere cura di non lasciarsi trapportare dalla curiosità né dal desiderio di sodisfare all'appetito di ogni uomo, ma star saldo nella gravità e antichità de' santi Padri e maggiori nostri." Ibid. 2: 403–404.

of viewers to similarly impious fantasies.[157] These curious novelties are perhaps problematic because they impiously seek to become overly familiar with sacred figures: being imagined in mundane moments, they destabilize their divinity. The tendency toward over familiarity is one that some Early Modern theologians mention, and it might be thought of as a possible problem associated with image-based meditations, which, by their nature, seek a degree of familiarity.[158] The problem that Paleotti points to is thus how to imagine sacred narrative whilst remaining piously inclined toward the subject: he is outlining an ethics of imagination.

Gilio da Fabriano also considers the rules by which the painter ought to imagine those details that are historically plausible though unmentioned in Scripture. Although he is sometimes perceived as the most inflexible opponent of artistic liberty, he recognizes that the artist must have some license to "invent" some material. On the topic of artistic liberties with history, he says

> I do not say that in these things one must be so tightly regulated that at times it would not be allowed to do otherwise; but these [liberties] must be [taken] in those things that nature can beautifully do, and necessarily could happen, and this license should always be used sparingly, because he who would stretch it more than one should, shows himself of little diligence and imprudent. The artist, therefore, who will well master the subject, can, whenever the desire comes to him, make a beautiful mixture of [elements] proper and improper [to the story], and from this he will always have honored praise.[159]

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157 "Chi dipingesse s. Pietro capo degli apostoli con la suocera e la figliuola a canto, o quando le visita che sono inferme, o in altro atto, se bene di carità, però insolito di essere veduto, non è dubbio che tal pittura più tosto da fantasticare alla mente, che divozione." Ibid. 2: 405. "Similimente che dipingesse s. Giovanni Evangelista con una perdice in mano, qual egli accarezzasse dolcemente e con essa s'andasse trattenendo, come scrive il Cassiano, certo che anco questo, per essere insolito, daria grandemente da maravigliare." Ibid.

158 A classic exposition of familiarity in religious life is given by Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), chapter 6.

159 "Non dirò già che queste cose s'abbino sì strettamente a regolare che a le volte non sia lecito fare il contrario; ma questo vorrebbe essere in quelle cose che la natura può vagamente fare, e necessariamente può cadere, e sempre usar la licenza parcamente, perché chi vuole stenderla più che non deve, si mostra poco accorto e diligente. L'artefice, dunque, che del soggetto sarà bene padrone, potrà, qualunque volta voglia gli ne viene, far vaga mescolanza de proprii e improprii, e di ciò n'arà sempre onorata lode." Gilio, *Dialogo*, 2: 52–53.

Ultimately, neither Gilio nor Paleotti can describe perfectly of what this beautiful mixture would consist or how it could be found. There are some guidelines, but it is something unpredictable, although the truth of the invention will be measured by its ability to illuminate the souls of viewers. Like finding the soul of the personage being painted in a historical picture (as described in chapter four), finding the correct way to vary history requires piety on behalf of the painter, and is something that will ultimately flow from his or her soul.

Vasari provides a good example of an impious invention that ignores the circumstances in his *vita* of Pontormo, indicating the relevance of these criteria to writers on art more broadly. Vasari recounts Pontormo's commission to paint the principal chapel of the church of San Lorenzo in Florence. The overwrought results of Pontormo's labor, however, come under scathing attack from Vasari who writes that he has

> never been able to understand the doctrine of this *storia*, even though I well know that Jacopo had *ingegno*, and frequented learned and lettered people. That is, what is it meant to signify in that part where Christ is above, raising the dead, and beneath His feet there is God the Father, who is creating Adam and Eve . . . It does not appear to me that in any place he has observed the order of *storia*, nor measure, nor time, nor the variety of heads, nor of changing the skin color, and in sum, no rule, nor proportion, nor any order of perspective. Rather, everything is full of nudes, with a order, design, invention and composition, coloring, and painting made in his own way, with so much melancholy, and with so little pleasure for he who looks at the work . . . Therefore it appears that in this he cared only for certain parts, and of others more important, he took no account whatsoever.[160]

160 "Ma io non ho mai potuto intendere la dottrina di questa storia, se ben so che Iacopo haveva ingegno da se, e praticava con persone dotte, e letterate, cio è quello volesse significare in quella parte dove è Cristo in alto, che risuscita i morti, e sotto i piedi ha Dio Padre, che crea Adamo, ed Eva. Oltre cio in uno de'canti, dove sono i quattro Evangelisti nudi con libri in mano; non mi pare anzi in niun luogo osservato, ne ordine di storia, ne misura, ne tempo, ne varieta di teste, non cangiamento di colori di carni, & in somma non alcuna regola ne proporzione, ne alcun ordine di prospettiva: ma pieno ogni cosa d'ignudi, con un ordine, disegno, invenzione, componimento, colorito, e pittura fatta a suo modo: con tanta malinconia, e con tanto poco piacere di chi guarda quell'opera . . . Onde pare che in questa non habbia stimato se non certe parti, e dell'altre piu importanti, non habbia tenuto conto niuno." Vasari, *Vite*, 3: 494.

Although Pontormo's works are now destroyed, the surviving preparatory drawings indicate that the invention did show some compositional irregularities (Figure 19).

FIGURE 19 *Jacopo Pontormo*, Christ in Glory and the Creation of Eve (*c. 1550*). *Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe, Uffizi, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

Without going into a detailed account of the work's reception, or the possible heretical dimensions that have been imputed to it, we may still perceive in Vasari's account the importance of the circumstances.[161] The results of Pontormo's work surprises Vasari because, as he notes, Pontormo "associated with learned and lettered persons." Despite his education, however, Pontormo's painting was a failure of invention, specifically as regards its order. To order a composition properly, as noted above, required artists to address the circumstances of the topic they intended to represent. Pontormo's failure to do so is evident in various ways. First, he appears to have neglected the circumstance of time by placing the creation of Adam and Eve below Christ raising the dead. Secondly, given the biblical narratives that he was seeking to portray, Pontormo should have considered the circumstance "who" when he was imagining the faces and figures of the people he was painting. This would have led him to naturally vary the figures more and make them of different age and countenance. Unfortunately, however, Vasari observes that there is no "variety in the heads." This is a failure of invention because invention, as a hermeneutic act, requires the artist to meditate upon the material so as to augment and expand the topic. Finally, the order of the invention fails because Pontormo was curious about certain parts and uninterested in others. As was suggested in chapter two, the inability to find such an order was directly related to a desire to attach oneself jealously or with curiosity to one part at the expense of the whole. Pontormo's work here suffered from this particular problem and it was a problem of invention: "he paid no attention to anything save certain parts, and of the other . . . parts he took no account." One problem with Pontormo's painting was thus that it failed to yoke together the inventory of the artist with the given material that he was charged to invent. Instead of bringing together these two things, he became curiously attached to certain parts.

As this discussion demonstrates, invention, as a pictorial activity, remained closely associated with the art of persuasion; however, given that pictorial invention involved reading and interpreting Scripture, it was most closely related to Christian rhetoric. We may also perceive a lingering echo of Augustine's statement that invention meant coming into the part of one's mind that was

161 The reception of the image has been recently discussed with respect to the artist's old age by Philip Sohm, *The Artist Grows Old: The Aging of Art and Artists in Italy, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); criticisms of the work have also been examined by Anton W.A. Boschloo, *The Limits of Artistic Freedom: Criticism of Art in Italy from 1500 to 1800* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2008). On the heretical dimensions of the painting, there have been several contributions, see particularly Massimo Firpo, *Gli affreschi di Pontormo a San Lorenzo: Eresia, politica e cultura nella Firenze di Cosimo I* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1997), who also considers Vasari's reception, chapter 2.

with God, since, through the lens of the word "invention," many of the themes that were previously discussed in this study are evident: the importance of detaching oneself from the care for material bodies, the inward turn that is essentially a search for something that is contained within, and belief that such detachment will allow one to correctly perceive the order of God's creations. These principles must be called upon during the process of inventing.

The concluding section of this chapter examines in more depth some limitations on painterly invention given by Paleotti concerning the depiction of so-called allegorical content and demonstrating that strictures regarding allegory relate to, once again, the proper interpretation or reading of the Bible.

From History to Allegory in Sacred Art

As the above discussion reveals, painters were instructed to recreate as fully as possible the historical meaning of Scripture, utilizing the circumstances to amplify their images appropriately. Beyond being restricted from inappropriately amplifying Scripture with their own impious or incorrect imaginations and fantasies, painters were also limited from representing the spiritual senses of Scripture, that is, from depicting visually the Bible's allegorical and mystical meanings. As will be seen, complaints by several art theorists about the use of allegory in art arose because they felt that artists were moving too quickly to represent the allegorical sense without clearly representing the literal or historical sense, complaints that stemmed from a principle of biblical exegesis that prioritized understanding the historical sense of Scripture. Although prominent in the Christian tradition in general, this principle was given special emphasis during the Counter-Reformation as pertaining to preaching, and, for instance, when Paleotti gives attention to this problem, it appears to be conjoined with concerns regarding the proper way of preaching Scripture.

When art theorists placed restrictions on the representation of allegory, they were commenting on the correct interpretation of Scripture, which thus concerns pictorial invention. Given that invention was translated from rhetoric to hermeneutics in the Middle Ages, as noted above, it became a process closely related to allegorical interpretation. Since the Bible was believed to veil multiple meanings—in Augustinian terms, to invent biblical material also involved reading the multiple senses of Scripture—it was through exegesis that "most hidden meanings have been invented."[162] Therefore, for Augustine,

162 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 2.29.41. "et sic pleraque inventa sunt quae latebant." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, *PL* 034.0081).

to invent was intimately related to the process of drawing out into the open the previously hidden or obscure meanings of Scripture.

Poetic inventions also bore some relationship to the discovery of secondary levels of meaning, although in contrast to the Bible, poetic invention involved the veiling of material. For instance, Boccaccio differentiates poetic invention from rhetorical invention, arguing that poetic invention "veils truth in a fair and fitting garment of fiction," adding that, though "rhetoric has also its own inventions . . . whatever is composed as under a veil, and thus exquisitely wrought, is poetry and poetry alone."[163] Thus, it is specifically in its veiled meanings that poetic invention differs from rhetorical invention. It is clear that Boccaccio sought to align poetry with divinely inspired Scripture in which spiritual truth could be found.[164] Although not making similar claims about the divine nature painting, it is likely that Alberti followed this poetic tradition in his discussion of veiled meaning in painterly invention. Alberti urges painters to "take pleasure in poets and orators" since "literary men, who are copious in knowledge of many things, will be of great assistance in preparing the composition of a *historia* beautifully, and the great virtue of this consists primarily in its invention."[165] Alberti, like Boccaccio, implies that

163 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium in an English Version with Introductory Essay and Commentary*, 2nd ed., trans. Charles G. Osgood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 41–42. "cuius opere fictiones suas ipsi componant, dum scalas gradibus distinctas in celum erigunt, dum proceras arbores ramorum fecundas eque ad astra producunt, dum montes in excelsum usque circumitionibus ambiunt? Dicent forsan, ut huic a se incognite detrahant, quo utuntur rethorice opus esse, quod ego pro parte non inficiar. Habet enim suas inventione rethorica, verum apud integumenta fictionum nulle sunt rethorice partes; mera poesis est, quicquid sub velamento componitur et exponitur exquisite." Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium libri*, ed. Vincenzo Romano (Bari: G. Laterza, 1951), 701.

164 This is part of a long tradition in medieval and Renaissance poetics of claiming that poetry had a divine status, a status hinging to a large extent on the belief that ideas consonant with Christian belief can be extracted from texts, even in the case of pagan authors. See Guiseppe Mazzotta, "Boccacio: The Mythographer of the City," in *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 355. See C. Kallendorf, "From Virgil to Vida: The Poeta Theologus in Italian Renaissance Commentary," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995). On the closeness between invention and allegory in Petrarch, see Everhart Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 81.

165 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.53. "Nam hi quidem multa cum pictore habent ornamenta communia. Neque parum illi quidem multarum rerum notitia copiosi litterati ad historiae compositionem pulchre constituendam iuvabunt, quae omnis laus praesertim in inventione consistit." "E farassi per loro dilettarsi de' poeti e degli oratori. Questi hanno molti

inventions are materials that may be unveiled when he praises an ancient invention of the three sisters Egle, Euphronesis and Thalia, writing that they had been painted "dressed in loose transparent robes, with smiling faces and hands intertwined; they thereby wished to demonstrate liberality, for one of the sisters gives, another receives and the third returns the favor."[166] With the words "they thereby wished to demonstrate," Alberti acknowledges that the invention invites or requires interpretation; this is part of what makes it an invention: it is material from which meaning can be invented. Similarly, in his *Libri delle osservationi*, Ludovico Dolce writes that poetry and painting imitate nature with the end of veiling moral invention: "the office of the poet is to imitate the actions of men; and the end, beneath elegant veils of useful invention and morals [is] to delight the soul of he who reads. Similar to the poet is the painter, because one and the other is intent to imitate."[167] Although Dolce eventually moves the emphasis away from invention in order to highlight the importance of imitation, it is clear that his notion of invention, as something from which meanings can be unveiled, is consistent with the tradition of invention as exegesis. It is, therefore, likely for this reason that the word invention is often used in Renaissance literature to describe works of art that would now be called "allegorical."[168] Thus, following the medieval translation of invention

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ornamenti comuni col pittore; e copiosi di notizia di molte cose, molto gioveranno a bello componere l'istoria, di cui ogni laude consiste in la invenzione." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.53.

166 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.54. "ex quibus liberalitatem demonstratam esse voluere, quod una sororum det, alia accipiat, tertia reddat beneficium; qui quidem gradus in omni perfecta liberalitate adesse debent. Vides quam huiusmodi inventa magnam artifici laudem comparent." "per quali volea s'intendesse la liberalità, ché una di queste sorelle dà, l'altra riceve, la terza rende il benificio; quali gradi debbano in ogni perfetta liberalità essere. Adunque si vede quanta lode porgano simile invenzioni all'artefice." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.54.

167 "Percioche l'uffcio del Poete è d'imitar le attioni de glihuomini; e il fine sotto leggiadre veli di morali & utili inventioni dilettar l'animo di chi legge. Simile al Poeta è il Dipintore; percioche l'uno e l'altro è intento alla imitatione" Ludovico Dolce, *Libi delle osservationi* (Venice, 1562), 189–191.

168 This may be observed by briefly surveying some citations from Vasari's *Vite*. When discussing the allegorical masquerades of Florentine carnivals designed by Piero di Cosimo, Vasari writes that it was because Piero was "di stravagante invenzione" that he was chosen to make the designs. Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 22. In another instance, a Crucifixion by Cimabue, in which angels take words written around the head of Christ and present them to the Virgin Mary, is described by Vasari as beginning to give "lume ed aprire la via all'invenzione." Ibid., 1: 86. Also, of Jacopo Della Quercia's enigmatic decision to paint a bear climbing

from rhetoric to hermeneutics, painterly and poetic invention is deeply related to a process of exegesis, through which secondary meanings are discovered.

In the pictorial invention of Scripture, problems arose when painters began mixing their inventive amplifications of scriptural history with inventive exegesis, or what might be called inventive allegorical interpretations of Scripture. In the Christian exegetical tradition, the historical level of Scripture was believed to be the foundation for all further exegesis; therefore, as will be seen, painterly invention erred when it began depicting Scripture's allegorical meanings instead of focusing on the historical sense. The medieval exegete Hugh of St. Victor prioritized the historical or literal meaning of Scripture, writing that it was the material through which one could perceive the mystical or allegorical meanings of Scripture. Hugh and many other exegetes advocated scriptural interpretation through a nearly scientific understanding of the literal or historical sense of Scripture, writing, as noted above, that "the foundation and principle of sacred learning . . . is history," without which one would never "be able to come perfectly sensitive to allegory,"[169] thus positing an understanding of history as the necessary prerequisite for allegorical understanding. In fact, it was this emphasis on the historical truth of the Bible that fundamentally differentiated Christian exegesis from earlier, classical forms of exegesis. The truth of the historical meaning of Scripture was identified by Henri De Lubac as an important quality that distinguished pagan from Christian exegesis. The Christian "allegory was therefore not, as it was for the pagan moralists, 'a refuge against the shame appropriate to myths' . . . On the contrary . . . for [the medieval exegetes], the reality of the history, [was] taken in its totality and right down to its hardest-to-believe and somberest pages."[170] It was the fundamental truth of history, and the inescapable relationship that allegory sustained to history, that distinguished Christian from classical exegesis. Consequently, medieval exegetes sought to understand every word, obscure metaphor, and incomprehensible passage of the Bible according to its historical meaning before attempting to divine God's mystically implanted meanings. The circumstances therefore not only helped establish a historical reading of Scripture, they also provided a foundation for further allegorical interpretation.

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a pear tree in an image of the Madonna and Saints, Vasari writes that he will "lasciare a ognuno sopra cotale invenzione credere, e pensare a suo modo." Ibid., 1: 251.

169 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3. "Fundamentum autem et principium doctrinae sacrae historia est, de qua quasi mel de favo veritas allegoriae exprimitur." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* (Migne, *PL* 176.0801).

170 De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 68–69; quoting Jean Pépin. See also Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* is frequently discussed in Renaissance art theory with respect to its allegorical meanings, a subject I have addressed in more depth elsewhere.[171] For instance, both Dolce and Gilio appear to perceive Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* as a confused mixture of inventive amplification and inventive, allegorical exegesis: that is, the painterly invention is no longer only an interpretation of the literal meaning of the text, but it also appears to represent visually the Bible's allegorical meanings. In Dolce's dialogue, the interlocutor Aretino criticizes Michelangelo's invention, implying that his painting is something that itself requires interpretation, asking what "mystical sense" can be yielded from such details as "having painted Christ without a beard? Or from seeing the devil that pulls down a figure, who out of pain is biting his finger, with one hand gripped on his testicles?"[172] Michelangelo is defended with the argument that "his invention is [so] ingenious and is understood by few," and, "containing profound allegorical senses," it places him among the "great philosophers who shrouded beneath the veil of poetry, supreme mysteries of human and theological philosophy so that they would not be grasped by the masses."[173] The suggestion is thus that his inventions are allegorical, or containing "mystical meanings," since, like Scripture, they require interpretation. In Gilio da Fabriano's dialogue, there is further evidence

171 The critical reaction to Michelangelo's painting has been frequently discussed. Reactions have been catalogued by Romeo De Maio, *Michelangelo e la controriforma* (Bari: Laterza, 1978). It has also been discussed thoroughly by Bernardine A. Barnes, *Michelangelo's Last Judgment: The Renaissace Response* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), and Melinda Schlitt, "Painting, Criticism, and Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Age of the Counter-Reformation," in *Michelangelo's Last Judgment*, ed. Marcia B. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Recently see Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie der frühen Neuzeit*, 420–432; Boschloo, *The Limits of Artistic Freedom*. I have explored these ideas in "Michelangelo and the Theory of Allegory in Sixteenth Century Literature on Art," in *Michelangelo Buonarroti: Leben, Werk und Wirkung/Michelangelo Buonarroti: Vita, Opere, Ricezione*, ed. Grazia Folliero-Metz, and Susanne Gramatzk (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013).

172 "Poi, che senso mistico si puo cavare dallo haver dipinto Christo sbarbato? o dal vedere un Diavolo, che tira in giù con la mano, aggrappata ne' testicoli, una gran figura, che per dolore si morde il dito?" Dolce, *Dialogo*, 166.

173 "cioè che Michelagnolo nel vinca d'assai, percioché odo dire che nell'ordine del suo stupendo Giudicio si contengono alcuni sensi allegorici profondissimi, i quali vengono intesi da pochi. ARET. In questo meriterebbe lode, essendo che parrebbe ch'egli avesse imitato quei gran filosofi che nascondevano sotto velo di poesia misteri grandiss imi della filosofia umana e divina, affine ch'e' non fossero intesi dal volgo." Ibid. "Vi ritorno a dire, che la sua invenzione è ingegnosissima e da pochi intesa." Ibid.

that Michelangelo's inventions are not merely inventive, they are allegorical interpretations of Scripture. For instance, interlocutors in Gilio's dialogue reason that Michelangelo may have painted Christ standing in order to convey an allegorical meaning. The scriptural account indicates that Christ "will sit in the seat of his majesty";[174] however, one of the discussants argues that these words rather signify "the souls of the just."[175] If Christ's posture conveys the meaning of "he who mystically and allegorically would interpret these words of the evangelist," this defense of Michelangelo is nonetheless refuted since "one must take the literal sentiment . . . and save the letter inasmuch as this is possible."[176] Gilio allows that the Bible cannot always be taken literally; however, the description of Christ's posture at the last judgment permits literal depiction and so paintings should not attempt to represent the mystical and allegorical meaning of the text.[177] These passages, amongst others, indicate that some viewers perceived Michelangelo's work as the visual representation of the Bible's mystical or allegorical senses.[178] Michelangelo's invention appeared to them, therefore, as crossing inventive amplification with inventive allegorical exegesis. Beyond simply amplifying Scripture's literal, historical meaning, Michelangelo appears to have been probing its mystical meanings and depicting these allegorical inventions. Michelangelo was therefore not criticized for creating what would now be called an allegorical image, but rather for depicting the allegorical meanings of Scripture.[179]

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174 "per la quale ha fatto Cristo in piede, dicendo la Scrittura che egli sederà ne la sedia de la maestà sua." Gilio, *Dialogo*, 2: 73.

175 "in questo caso non denotano la sedia materiale . . . ma l'anime de' giusti, essendo scritto: 'L'anima de' giusti è sedia de la sapienza.' " Ibid.

176 "Chi misticamente et allegoricamente interpretar volesse le parole del testo evangelico, potrebbe questa vostra opinione passare; ma prima si deve prendere il sentimento letterale, quando propriamente dar si possa, e poi gli altri, e salvare la lettera quanto più possibil sia." Ibid., 2: 74.

177 "Ma il sedere che farà nel giudizio intender si deve con effetto e veramente, perché da questo atto non nasce assurdo né sconvenevolezza." Ibid.

178 I discuss this theme further in "Michelangelo and the Theory of Allegory." Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*, has interpreted several paintings and drawings by Michelangelo to demonstrate how Michelangelo's intention was, as the above critics suggest, to figure not the historical reality but rather its spiritual meaning of sacred narrative, thus making what Nagel has called 'hermeneutic demands' on the viewer; see particularly chapters 5 and 6.

179 Blunt's discussion in *Artistic Theory in Italy*, 111, would have benefited from being clearer on this point. Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, does not distinguish between poetic and biblical allegory in his discussion of this theme, 1: 133. Other interpretations

It is again Paleotti who provides one of the most sustained meditations on the error of introducing allegorical inventions into paintings of sacred history. He chastises artists who, introducing new motifs into biblical narrative, stray from the historical sense of Scripture with the excuse that they are representing allegorical meanings.

> We also know that some painters justify the introduction of novelties [into their paintings] with the supposed allegorical sense, and from this [justification] it is born that they paint our Savior in the midst of his apostles in regal dress or in Episcopal habit or in the clothing of a religious person professed to any religion. Others would paint the Madonna with the Christ Child in arms all resplendent in light and richly adorned, with brocaded clothes, and a crown of gems on her head, and many other things that they have imagined . . .[180]

If, for example, an allegorical interpretation of the text indicated that Christ was a King and that Mary was a Queen, the painter should not paint this as though it were historically true, but should rather attend to the literal meaning of the text. It is against such misrepresentations of Scripture that the word "allegory" is most often evoked in art theory of the Italian Renaissance.

By restraining artistic invention, and limiting painting to a careful amplification of Scriptural history, the writings of Paleotti, Gilio and others have sometimes been interpreted as an unfortunate curtailment of artistic liberty.[181] However, reading these authors in the context of medieval exegesis suggests rather that these authors envisioned historical painting that would facilitate a profound experience of Scripture, leading the mind toward the allegorical meanings they seem to censure. This experience would only become possible, however, by first interpreting and representing the historical meaning of

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include Maria Calì, *Da Michelangelo all'Escorial. Momenti del dibattito religioso nell'arte del Cinquecento* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1980), 29–30, where the historical simplicity advocated by Paleotti is compared to the "allegories" supported by other sixteenth-century authors (for example, Comanini); also see Barnes, *Michelangelo's Last Judgment*, 100.

180 "Sappiamo ancora che alcuni pittori scusano talora le loro novità col senso allegorico, e di qui nasce che dipingeranno il Salvator nostro in mezzo de' suoi apostoli con l'abito regale, o con l'abito episcopale, overo col vestimento di religioso professo d'alcuna religione. Altri dipingeranno la Madonna col fanciullo in braccio risplendente tutta di luce e riccamente adorna, con vestimenti di broccato e corona di gemme in capo: et altri altre cose che s'hanno imaginate." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 406. On this passage, see also Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica delle arti figurative*, 47.

181 See Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy*, 112.

Scripture according to the principles of biblical exegesis. As Hugh of St. Victor writes, the historical meaning was the foundation upon which the allegorical meanings were supported, and consequently allegory could not be obtained without a clear understanding of history. Besides observing historical accuracy by using the circumstances, Paleotti provides numerous examples of how paintings ought to represent the literal meaning of Scripture specifically so that allegorical meanings could be derived from these images, indicating that some moments in Scripture lend themselves to allegorical interpretation. For example, this is particularly the case when Scripture describes what Paleotti calls "prodigious and monstrous subjects."[182] In the case of such subjects Paleotti counsels artists to represent the literal meaning of Scripture in order to facilitate allegorical interpretation. He writes:

> the monstrosities that are of our imagination can be considered in two ways: either they are products purely of the imagination [or] when the imagination is moved from a superior cause and from divine revelation. In the first case all monsters invented by poets can be included . . .
>
> In the second way we mean those things that are not born from the fictions of vain men, but which are found narrated in the sacred volumes, or of the saintly doctors, those which for their divine grace as supernatural things, and full of great mysteries, have been revealed. Therefore, we call them allegorical and mysterious because they figure things different from that which they demonstrate, such as the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, who has a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, a stomach of metal, legs of iron, and feet of earth: that which signified the various conditions and times that would follow, as it was very wisely interpreted by Daniel (Daniel, 2). Such things have been many of the visions of the patriarchs and prophets narrated in sacred Scripture, and principally the Apocalypse is full of mystical senses that can all be usefully represented, adding the place in Scripture from which they have been taken, such that the eye does not remain in confusion.[183]

182 "Delle pitture monstruose e prodigiose." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 419.

183 "Mostri imaginati si possono pigliare in due modi, cioè o che sono falsamente finti dalla pura nostra imaginazione, over che sono formati dalla imaginazione nostra, mossa però da cause superiori e divina revelazione. Nel primo modo si comprendono quelli che si hanno finti i poeti . . . Nel secondo modo intendiamo quelli che non nascono da finzione vana d'uomini, ma si trovano narrati nelli sacri volumi, o dai dottori santi, a' quali per divina grazia, come cose sopranaturali e piene di gran misterii, sono state revelate, onde li chiamiamo allegorici e misteriosi, perché figurano cose diverse da quelle che

In this passage of the Old Testament, King Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue with a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, a stomach of metal, and so on, which Daniel interprets as a prophecy of the ages to come: the golden head, for example, representing the King's age, which would be followed by the age of silver. Therefore, like the bronze serpent that foretold the passion of Christ, the dream statue foretold coming ages: as the words of God, both have spiritual meanings within them and it is for this reason that Paleotti refers to the dream statue as allegorical and mysterious. It is clear then that, according to Paleotti, allegorical senses can be yielded from works of art, because he states firmly that it is appropriate to create painted or sculpted representations of such mystical monsters. In Paleotti's discussion, the word "mystery" marks the presence of God, and therefore he finds allegory only in the monsters that have been historically or literally described in sacred Scripture, not monsters invented by the mind of man.[184] Therefore, whilst the monster leads to allegorical meanings, it must first be represented according to the literal and historical word of Scripture.

For Paleotti, as noted earlier, an image always leads its viewer to some new thought: only the monster described in the words of God could lead the viewer to higher, mystical meanings; monsters created from the imagination of an artist could not make such promises. Paleotti writes that grotesque statues have been defended by

> the sense of morality and allegory that is placed inside [of them]. But, leaving aside the great authors who have judged similar fables as not being able to be tolerated for any pretense of allegory, and others who have written clearly that this is a way of coloring or veiling, and that this has been imagined by some to cover in some way the ugliness and foolishness of these fables . . . We, with regards to these grotesques say that these ordinarily, as everyone knows, do not hide any beneficial senses . . .[185]

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dimostrano, sì come era la statua di Nebuchodonosor, che avea il capo d'oro, le braccia e petto d'argento, il ventre di metallo, le gambe di ferro, et i piedi di terra: il che significava la varia condizione de' tempi che dovea seguire, sì come fu interpretato sapientissimamente da Daniello. Tali ancora sono state molte visioni de' patriarchi e profeti narrate nella Scrittura sacra e principalemente nell'Apocalisse, piene di sensi mistici, che tutte utilmente si potranno rappresentare, aggiongendovi il luoco della Scrittura onde sono cavate, acciò gli occhi di chi le vede non restino confusi." Ibid., 2: 421.

184 Thus, in the words of Henri de Lubac, it can be said that in medieval Biblical exegesis "spirit, mystery, allegory . . . are . . . three major, practically synonymous vocabulary items." De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 24.

185 "Per la quale ragione potrà parere forsi ad alcuno ch'anco queste grottesche si possano defendere col senso della moralità et allegoria che dentro vi è posta. Ma noi, lasciando

Such a passage might normally be understood as evidence of Paleotti's hostility to allegory.[186] As per the stipulations of the Council of Trent which instructed that bishops should ensure "that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged" in sacred images, Paleotti was likewise highly concerned about clarity in images.[187] Based on this principle, and considering his above comments on grotesques, it is sometimes said that Paleotti forbade allegory in painting; however, in view of the discussion above, it would be more accurate to say that he desired clarity in painting so that the allegorical sense or meaning could be obtained by the viewer within his or her own mind.[188]

Paleotti's emphasis on the literal level of meaning of Scripture in art conforms to Tridentine reforms on preaching, which cautioned against elaborate allegorical exegesis in sermons. This is noted, for instance, in Valier's treatise on preaching, where, citing Augustine, he notes that it is necessary for preachers to know how to explain the historical meaning of Scripture, adding that it is the foundation for further interpretation.[189] Similarly, Paleotti's own sermons bear witness to this principle and only on occasion move to the spiritual meaning of Scripture, and then only with very familiar passages.[190] The limitation of painters regarding the historical understanding of Scripture therefore appears to stem from the similarity between artists and sacred orators.[191] Painters were similar to orators, and dissimilar from authors, in that clarity in their works was essential: whereas in Scripture it was appropriate for the text to be obscure, the painter, in Paleotti's opinion, must never wander into ambiguity. In this

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per ora scrittori grandi, che simili favole hanno giudicato non dovere essere tolerate sotto pretesto d'alcuna allegoria, et altri ch'hanno scritto chiaramente che questo è stato un modo di colore o di velame imaginato da alcuni per coprire in qualche modo la bruttezza o sciocchezza di quelle favole, e che i Romani non volsero mai admettere simili allegorie; noi quanto al proposito delle grottesche, diciamo che esse ordinariamente come ognuno sa, non hanno ascoso alcuno senso giovevole." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 450–451.

186 Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450o–1600*, 110–112, was one of the first to make this statement. The general ambivalence with which Paleotti's text has been received by art historians has been noted by Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, 1: 121.

187 See *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees*, 236.

188 This is broadly noted by Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica dell arti figurative*, 58. Steinemann, *Eine Bildtheorie zwishen Repräsentation und Wirkung*, also calls attention to the interior experience of art in Paleotti's theory of art.

189 "Historicum igitur expositionis genus admodum necessarium in primis Ecclesiasticus orator aggrediatur, quia si negligatur, periculum est, ne incidat in varios errores." Valier, *De rhetorica*, book 3, chapter 53.

190 Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, 2: 108.

191 See Hecht, *Katholische Bildertheologie der frühen Neuzeit*, for a broader discussion of the relevance of rhetorical techniques for artists, 274–284.

respect Paleotti follows Augustine closely. Augustine explains that Scripture was written obscurely but that the interpreters of Scripture "should not speak in such a way that they set themselves up as similar authorities"; rather, they should "endeavor first and foremost in all their sermons to make themselves understood."[192] Paleotti, likewise, writes that paintings should be simple and clear; the ability of the viewer to understand and be persuaded by the image was paramount.

> One of the greatest praises that can be given to a writer or a professor of whatever discipline is to say that he knows how to explain the concepts of a material with great clarity . . . The same thing can be said in general about a painter, and so much more in the case that his works are used as books . . . [However,] it happens often that one can see in many places, and above all in churches, paintings that are so obscure and ambiguous in their meaning that instead of illuminating the intellect and provoking contemplation and devotion and compuncting the heart, they do no other than to confound the mind with their obscurity, to distract it in a thousand different directions . . .[193]

The image should not, therefore, distract the mind of the viewer, but stimulate contemplation. Paleotti also writes that images should compunct the heart (*pungere il cuore*), a statement that recalls the simplicity advocated by Bocchi in chapter one, whereby the image was to facilitate compunction, unobstructed by difficult imagery or ornamentation. One can imagine that a painting of the dream statue of Nebuchadnezzar was a potentially obscure image, and it is suggestive that Paleotti recommends adding the relevant place in Scripture

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192 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 4.8.22. "Non ergo expositores eorum ita loqui debent, tamquam se ipsi exponendos simili auctoritate proponant, sed in omnibus sermonibus suis primitus ac maxime ut intellegantur elaborent, ea quantum possunt perspicuitate dicendi, ut aut multum tardus sit qui non intelligat, aut in rerum quas explicare atque ostendere volumus difficultate ac subtilitate, non in nostra locutione sit causa quo minus tardiusve quod dicimus possit intelligi." Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* (Migne, PL 034.0099).

193 "Una delle principali laudi che sogliono darsi ad uno autore o professore di qualche scienza, è ch'egli sappia chiaramente esplicare i suoi concetti . . . Il medesimo possiamo affermare in universale del pittore, e tanto più, quanto l'opere sue servono principalmente per libro . . . accade che ogni giorno se veggono in varii luoghi, e massimamente nelle chiese, pitture così oscure et ambigue, ch'ove doveriano, illuminando l'intelletto, eccitare insieme la divozione e pungere il cuore, elle con la loro oscurità confondono per modo la mente, che la distraeno in mille parti." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 408.

from which the image is taken so that the viewer may eventually transcend the actual image and obtain its "soul." Paleotti notes that when painting the dream statue of Nebuchadnezzar, it is important to indicate "the place in Scripture from which [it has] been taken, such that the eye does not stay in confusion."[194] It is not a suggestion he adds lightly and, frequently in the case of fantastical images, he recommends including some words to clarify, if not the full meaning of the image, then at least the passage of Scripture from which it came, or some words to indicate the "marrow" of the image.[195]

The problem of mixing inventive amplification with inventive allegorical interpretation was that allegorical meanings were potentially obscure. This is demonstrated when Paleotti clarifies the distinction between the acceptable obscurity of Scripture and the unacceptable obscurity of its interpreters. He writes that it is appropriate for philosophers and writers to write about "sacred things, called 'mysteries' " obscurely because

> the great secrets of God should not be manifest to the multitude of profane [people] but rather should be treated with enigma . . . As when before the sacred relic one places a subtle veil or a transparent crystal, so that the great secrets of eternal reality must be conserved/sustained in their majesty . . . But this motivation of the theologians does not count for painters, who, in representing things, must aim only to show how much has been said by the saintly doctors and accepted by universal consensus of the church, without adding or taking away . . .[196]

194 See footnote 183, above.

195 "E però chi volesse pure dipingere qualche favola d'Esopo o de' poeti, dovria insieme aggiongervi la medolla espressa con parole significanti il concetto intcriore dirizzato alla disciplina della vita, accioché si conoscesse che non ci contentiamo di quel diletto col quale non sia principalmente congionto il giovamento." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 387. "A che gioverà principalmente l'aggiungervi in luogo conveniente il nome del misterio o del santo, quando non sia figura notissima." Ibid., 2: 411. "lodaressimo assai alcuno breve e significate motto, che venisse a dar anima e vita alla imagine." Ibid., 2: 461.

196 "giudicando essi che gli alti secreti di Dio non si avessero da scoprire alla profana moltitudine, ma più tosto con enigmi e sensi parabolici da trattarsi, il che e da'santi dottori nostri è stato admesso nei misterii magiori della religione nostra; volendo che, sì come inanzi le reliquie sacre si pone qualche sottile velo o trasparente cristallo, così i gran segreti delle cose eterne si avessero a conservare nella sua maiestà . . . Ma questa ragione de'teologi non può aver molto luoco nei pittori, i quali nelle cose sacre solamente rappresentano quello che si truova essere proposto dai santi dottori, et accetato dal commune consenso della Chiesa, non aggiongendo, ne minuendo." Ibid., 2: 409

This passage clearly recalls Dolce's dialogue, where it is suggested that Michelangelo was like the "great philosophers who shrouded beneath the veil of poetry, supreme mysteries of human and theological philosophy so that they would not be grasped by the masses."[197] As has been noted in chapter four, the veil metaphor was closely associated with the spiritual meanings of Scripture; obscurity, therefore, appears related to the mystical or allegorical meanings of the Bible. Scripture and literary expositions were appropriately obscure whereas there was no place for obscurity in the visual representation of Scripture. Paleotti further writes that the obscurity of spiritual meanings is appropriate since such meanings cannot be rendered clearly through human means.

> This obscurity is born ultimately from inability: because at times one searches to express something that of its nature is not possible to make, being so secret and difficult, that it is not possible to render it easily understandable to the public: such things are for example the . . . the secrets of divine providence, the mysteries of predestination and similar other things . . . as Augustine says [in the *De doctrina Christiana*] "There are some things which are not understood, or barely understood, in themselves, no matter how carefully they are expressed or how many times they are repeated by even the plainest of speakers. These things should seldom be put to a popular audience, and then only if there is a pressing need, or arguably never at all."[198]

Whilst Augustine was writing about preaching, Paleotti was writing about sacred art. Thus, from these passages, it may be posited that inasmuch as painting was similar to the teaching of Scripture, it should refrain from trying to represent the allegorical meanings of Scripture so as to avoid obscurity.

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197 See footnote 173, above.

198 "Nasce ultimamente questa oscurità del non potere; perché alle volte si cercano di esprimere cose di sua natura non fattibili, tanto recondite e difficili, che non si può commodamente rederne capace il popolo, sì come sono l'operazioni delle intelligenze, i secreti della providenza divina, i misteri della predestinazione, e simili: dai quali il rimedio più sicuro è l'asternersene più che si può, acconsentendoli però interiormente con la vera fede, sì come ammonisce s. Agostino con queste parole *Sunt quaedam quae sua vi non intelliguntur, aut vix intelliguntur, quantumvis plenissime dicentis versentur eloquio, quae in populi audientiam, vel raro si aliquid urget, vel nunquam omnino mittenda sunt*." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 411–412.

It is noteworthy, however, that Paleotti did not believe that clarity brought a limit to the spiritual efficacy of the image, but rather facilitated the "contemplation and devotion" to which viewers aspired. Although Paleotti did not believe that artists had jurisdiction to investigate allegorical meanings in their paintings, believing rather that the task of finding the "other higher and more hidden meanings" should be given to priests or theologians, "otherwise [painters] would confuse everything by passing recklessly from the state of nature to either that of grace or of glory," he did assert that representation of historical materials would allow viewers to penetrate their interior "marrow."[199] For instance, in one known example, Paleotti pursued a spiritual reading of Scripture on the grounds that it was a passage about which he had adequately preached earlier; thus, his literal interpretations served as the platform for further spiritual ascent.[200] As such, Paleotti was not trying to drain art of its liberty so much as impose an order on this particular form of biblical study much like Hugh of St. Victor, who wrote that "you will [not] be able to become perfectly sensitive to allegory unless you have first been grounded in history."[201] Toward the end of his treatise, Paleotti includes an interesting section regarding the utility of paintings for different classes of people. He notes that paintings should be satisfactory and useful not only to illiterate people, but also to spiritual people, writing that the former would recognize good paintings as something proportioned to them, and the latter would be compuncted by the knowledge that they are not similar to such images.[202] Paleotti does

199 "diciamo che, essendo l'officio del pittore l'imitare le cose nel naturale suo essere e puramente come si sono mostrate agli occhi de'mortali, non ha egli da trapassare i suoi confini, ma lasciare a'teologi e sacri dottori il dilitarle ad altri sentimenti più alti e più nascosti. Altrimente serìa un confondere ogni cosa e passare tumultuariamente dallo stato della natura a quello della grazia o della gloria." Ibid., 2: 406.

200 Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, 2: 108. "Solo dopo un'esauriente analisi testuale si può cercare un senso spirituale traslato, un senso mistico non immediatamente deducibile del testo scritturistico; a questo però il Paleotti arriva poche volte e appoggiandosi alle interpretazioni già date dai Padri o dalla liturgia. Per la festa dell'Assunzione della Vergine del 1583 il Paleotti dice, ad esempio, che dopo aver analizzato per anni, dal 1576 al 1582, parola per parola il brano evangelico, può infine passare seguendo l'esempio dei Padri a cercare il senso mistico."

201 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3. "Neque ego te perfecte subtilem posse fieri puto in allegoria, nisi prius fundatus fueris in historia." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalico*, 6.3. (Migne, *PL* 176.0799).

202 "Essendo dunque le pitture sacre principalmente per lo spirito, necessariamente conviene ch'aggradischino quello, o, per dire meglio, che siano formate con tali segni

not, therefore, recommend that paintings depict plain, unornamented historical material simply so that they can appeal to the lowest common denominator, but rather because he views it as the only proper path toward the interior, mysterious marrow of Scripture. Paleotti was not alone in this sentiment and, in fact, Gilio da Fabriano writes that the original intention of sacred art was to enable a kind of "reading" concerned with finding allegorical meaning.

> The intention of the first Church Fathers was none other than to . . . plant the new faith, extracted from the concordance between the New and Old Testaments; such that those who could not read, seeing the sacred history, would easily come into cognition of the sacred mysteries of one and the other Testament.[203]

As noted above, in Aquinas' definition of the spiritual senses of Scripture, allegory was the sense concerned with finding "concordance between the New and Old." Therefore, Gilio is essentially arguing that, historically, images were implemented by the Church to display allegorical meaning to people who could not read. One imagines that Gilio had in mind the medieval and early Renaissance fresco cycles (or some panel works) in which both the Old Testament stories and the New Testament stories are told next to one another, allowing the viewer to note the similarities between the two, or how the Old Law prefigures the New. We may take, for example, Giotto's frescos in the Arena Chapel of *The Raising of Lazarus* and *The Creation of Adam* in the decorative band beside the painting of Lazarus (Figure 20).

Though this is not the place for an in-depth consideration of the iconology of this cycle, it may be supposed that the two images are paired next to one another because each scene depicts a moment in which life is given or created, and so the pairing emphasizes the relationship between the Old and the New Testament, and hence encourages a method of interpretation similar to the method of Biblical or allegorical interpretation. Thus, there is a formal

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di religione e santità, che quegli che già hanno fatto l'abito nello spirito e si chiamano spirituali, vedendole, se ne compiacciano come di cosa a loro proporzionata; e gli altri, mirandole e accorgendosi di essere loro dissimili, si compungano e si destino a qualche principio di devozione." Paleotti, *Discorso*, 2: 501–502.

203 "E l'intento di que'primi padri altro non fu che di sterpare l'idolatria, levando via la memoria de'falzi e profani dèi, de' quali i loro tempî erano pieni, e di piantarvi la nova fede, cavata da la concordanza de la nova e vecchia Scrittura; et acciò chi leggere non sapeva, vedendo l'istorie sacre, facilmente potesse venire in cognizione de'sacrati misterii de l'uno e l'altro Testamento." Gilio, *Dialogo*, 2: 108.

FIGURE 20 *Giotto di Bondone*, The Resurrection of Lazarus (*after 1305*). *Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

similarity between God the Father reaching out his hand toward Adam and Christ, who adopts a similar pose to reach out toward Lazarus. There are doubtless more complex meanings to be evoked from these images, but on the very first level the images seem to demonstrate the relationship between the Old Law and the New, as Gilio suggests.

Unlike earlier artists such as Giotto, who sought to demonstrate the truth of Christ by showing concordances between the Old and New law, Gilio and Paleotti proposed that the simple representation of history would lead the viewer to interior meanings through contemplation. This is not to say that images had not accomplished this task previously, only that this specific goal was becoming the object of a growing literary discourse. Within this discourse, pictures were becoming more like Scripture than they had been previously: as Paleotti began to apply the semiotic terms used to describe Scripture (as noted above) to painted images, he recognized that paintings, like Scripture, might excite contemplation equally in illiterate and spiritual men, through each using the image in a way appropriate to his or her abilities. Paleotti, as previous scholars have noted, was closely associated with natural philosophers who pursued the observation of nature; doubtless for Paleotti, such studies

were justified on the grounds that they allowed for a greater understanding of Scripture's historical meaning.[204] Studies have also discussed the extent to which his ideas regarding historical accuracy may have been implemented by artists.[205] And, of course, the accurate depiction of sacred history is tied ultimately to Paleotti's belief that the visible world, as God's creation, could serve as an appropriate path to spiritual contemplation, rising from the physical to the intellectual. Thus, historical accuracy became privileged in late sixteenth-century art theory and took on a quasi-spiritual importance: it was not only necessary to make paintings clear for uneducated people; rather, the perfect historical description of Scripture provided the material for spiritual ascent. We have already noted how Gilio used the circumstances to obtain a proper historical reading of Scripture; later in his dialogue he charges painters to record the details of history, seemingly for its own sake: "and if painters would have attended, from time to time, to conserve for memory the use of things, one would see how much mutation the world has made in everything, not only from reign to reign and from province to province, but from city to city and nation to nation."[206] Thus, the painter goes from being a historical interpreter of Scripture to a chronicler of visual history.

Paleotti thus situated painting as a profoundly religious act entailing the presentation of sacred history, amplified through invention and rendered in such a way that, like the Word itself, the image might spur contemplation. It is therefore significant that when he discusses how painters are like both writers and orators, Paleotti refers to Aquinas' definition of religion. In this passage, Aquinas recalls two possible etymologies of the word religion. The first maintains that "a man is said to be religious from 'relegio' because he often ponders over, and, as it were, reads again [relegit] the things which pertain to the

204 Paleotti's relationship with the natural philosopher Ulisse Aldrovandi has been discussed by Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, 1: 113–116. Also see Prodi, *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, chapter 18; also, on the importance of nature in Paleotti's theory of art, see Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica delle arti figurative*.

205 See Prodi, *Ricerca sulla teorica dell arti figurative*, 58–63. Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, also discusses the extent to which artists may have been exposed to Paleotti's ideas. More recently, Paleotti's artistic *milieu* has been studied by Ilaria Bianchi, *La politica delle immagini nell'età della Controriforma: Gabriele Paleotti teorico e committente* (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2008).

206 "E se i pittori avessero atteso di tempo in tempo a conservare la memoria de l'uso de le cose, si vederebbe quanta mutazione ha fatto il mondo in ogni cosa, non solo di regno in regno e di provinzia in provinzia, ma di città in città e di nazione in nazione." Gilio, *Dialogo*, 2: 53.

worship of God."[207] It is possible that this definition, though it is not mentioned explicitly by Paleotti, was in the foreground of his thought when he cast the painter as an interpreter and representer of Scripture. Therefore, to paint is both to perform a rereading of Scripture whilst making reading possible for others.

This chapter has focused on Paleotti, though seeking to place his ideas within the broader discourse on art in the sixteenth century in order to reveal how ideas that were given prominence in the Counter-Reformation also resonate beyond the reform movement. Paleotti's theory of art situates the image at the intersection of traditions of scriptural interpretation, prayer and preaching. The process of painterly invention, thus, was tied to larger spiritual problems including Scripture's multiple levels of meaning, the importance of the historical meaning, and the mind's imaginative meditations on sacred narrative. Ultimately, the techniques of painterly invention embraced methods that were inherited not only from poetics and classical rhetoric, but also from the arts of contemplative meditation, scriptural interpretation and sacred oratory.

The concluding chapter of this study, whilst standing apart thematically from the previous five, applies concepts developed through the analysis of texts about sacred art and applies them to a text written about a secular work of art. Many of the themes noted in this chapter reappear, particularly the spiritual importance of history as the foundation for contemplation.

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207 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2–2, q. 81, a. 1. This etymology is from the Etymologiae of Isidore of Seville.

CHAPTER 6

Vasari's City of God: Spirituality, Art and Architecture in Vasari's 'Lives' and 'Ragionamenti'

Spirituality in Vasari's Literary Context

The writings of Giorgio Vasari have been evoked several times in this study to serve as examples of broader themes evident in Renaissance writings on art. In the final chapter of this book, Vasari's writings and the scholarly, courtly context in which they were composed are my central concern. This final chapter stands somewhat apart from the arc of logic traced to this point, which examined how the mind of the artist was evoked as a space needing spiritual preparation to create works of religious art, focusing subsequently on the task of imagining the faces, bodies and complete scenes of sacred history. These central themes return in this chapter; however, the works of art in question are decidedly secular. The main focus of this chapter is the text Vasari wrote about the series of secular historical and mythological paintings he created to decorate the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, described in his *Ragionamenti . . . sopra le inventioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel palazzo di Loro Altezze Serenissime*. This concluding chapter thus demonstrates how paradigms of Christian spirituality remained relevant and became foundational to the experience of secular art. Therefore, if throughout this book I have described how the writings of pagan authors were appropriated to express Christian concepts, I propose here to explore how Christian paradigms shaped Vasari's approach to secular painting, as is made evident through literary analysis of his writings. In his text describing the secular images he created for the Palazzo Vecchio, we find recurring many of the prominent themes of this book: the Christian approach to allegorical or biblical interpretation; the spiritual importance of authentic history; and the artist's mind as a space for contemplation and meditation. Beyond shaping his approach to secular painting in the *Ragionamenti*, this chapter also demonstrates how these Christian themes are consistently evoked in his *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori* as well as in the writings of some of his advisors. My discussion of these texts will be oriented around the Christian belief that Christ is the foundation of the Christian's internal fortress of faith; in this chapter, this theme and other interlinked ideas will illuminate how Vasari's writings accord spiritual meanings to architectural structures and their histories, and consequently to the paintings and sculptures that adorn them,

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which, as will be discussed, becomes essential to understanding his renovations of the Palazzo Vecchio, the secular paintings he created to decorate the palace, as well as more broadly the nature of the artistic renewal in Florence in the Renaissance.

As has been often remarked, Vasari's *Vite* were in many ways implicated in the cultural politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici; the 1550 "Torrentiniana" edition celebrated the rebirth of art with a particular Florentine bias, and these themes were further developed in the 1568 "Giuntina" edition, which sought to establish the cultural supremacy of Florentine art while promoting living members of the Accademia del Disegno, the first modern art academy founded in Florence.[1] Vasari's own prolific output as a painter was likewise bound to the courtly context around Duke Cosimo, for whom he undertook major commissions, including the renovation and redecoration of the Palazzo Vecchio, a literary description of which Vasari provided in his *Ragionamenti*.[2] The spiritual

1 With respect to the composition of the two editions of the *Vite*, see T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), chapter 2; Patricia Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, chapter 5, especially 197–204, discusses the political importance of the *Vite* with regard to the creation of the second edition. Most recently, the second edition has been discussed with respect to the formation of the Accademia del Disegno by Marco Ruffini, *Art Without an Author: Vasari's Lives and Michelangelo's Death* (New York: Fordham University Press: 2011). Comparison of the two editions is greatly facilitated by the comparative edition: Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, ed. Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi, 6 vols. (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1966–1987), PDF e-books at http://www.memofonte.it/ . On the production of the two editions, see Carlo Maria Simonetti, *La vita delle "Vite" Vasariane: profilo storico di due edizioni* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2005); Rosanna Bettarini, "Vasari Scrittore: Come la Torrentiniana diventò Giuntina," in *Il Vasari, sotriografo e artista: Atti del Congresso internazionale nel IV centenario della morte* (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1976); Paola Barocchi, "Palazzo Vecchio fra le due redazioni delle 'Vite' vasariane," in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500* (Florence: Olschki, 1983).

2 Vasari's work for Cosimo has been extensively discussed; for a comprehensive study of the paintings in the Palazzo Vecchio, see Ettore Allegri and Alessandro Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici: Guida Storica* (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1980); Paola Barocchi, *Vasari pittore* (Milan: Edizioni per il Club del libro, 1964), 38–48, 53–62; Ugo Muccini and Alessandro Cecchi, *Le stanze del principe in Palazzo Vecchio* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1991); Julian-Matthias Kliemann, *Gesta dipinte: La grande decorazione nelle dimore italiane dal Quattrocento al Seicento* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1993), 69–78; Roland Le Mollé, *Giorgio Vasari: L'homme des Médicis* (Paris: Bernard Grasse, 1995), on renovations to the Palazzo Vecchio see 301–309. More recently, the growing literature on the decorations of the Palazzo Vecchio includes Ferruccio Canali and Virgilio Carmine Galati, eds., *Palazzo Vecchio e dintorni* (Florence: Alinea Editrice, 2009); Émilie Passignat, "Cosimo I, Vasari, Palazzo Vecchio e la censura ecclesiastica," in *Minimalismo e oltre: sintomi* (*e verifiche*) *della postomodernità* (Rome: Carocci, 2009); Andrea Gáldy, " 'Che

themes that will be examined in this chapter, therefore, arise in a context in which writing and art making were done in part to meet political ends. This might encourage the skeptical interpretation that spirituality is deployed merely for material gain. For example, Vasari's renovations of Florentine mendicant churches for Duke Cosimo, in prompt accordance with the principles stipulated by the Council of Trent, has been viewed in light of Cosimo's desire to obtain papal favor.[3] Though there is much evidence to support such skepticism, there is also reason to believe, particularly when Vasari's writings are examined in light of texts by his learned advisors, that spirituality was yoked to sincere piety. Whatever the case, the particular themes that will be presented here are pervasive in Vasari's writings, suggesting that they were consciously employed to enhance Vasari's historic and artistic project.

Though many scholars believe Vasari's writings have a certain unifying coherence, the precise nature of Vasari's historical and artistic project—in the *Vite* and his *Ragionamenti*—resists easy definition, in part due to the incredible scope of his writings, which have, increasingly in recent years, been posited as the products of multiple authors.[4] Whilst it is clear that several close advisors helped Vasari to shape his texts, there is some disagreement as to the extent of their involvement, or the authenticity of Vasari's authorial voice. Putting aside this controversy while exploring Vasari's literary *milieu*, this study does not analyze the works of Vasari's advisors to reattribute portions of Vasari's texts to different authors.[5] Rather, what emerges is a picture of a literary and artistic

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sopra queste ossa con nuovo ordine si vadano accommodando in più luoghi appartamenti': thoughts on the organization of the Florentine Ducal apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio in 1553," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 46 (2002). On Cosimo I's cultural project more generally, and Vasari's participation in it, see Henk Th. van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his self-representation in Florentine art and culture*, trans. Andrew P. McCormick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Philip Jacks, ed., *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

3 See Marcia Hall, *Renovation and Counter Reformation*, chapter 1.

4 A history and balanced view of arguments for and against co-authorship may be found in Ruffini, *Art Without an Author*, chapter 3. The discussion stems in part from Charles Hope, "Can You Trust Vasari?" *New York Review of Books* 42 (1995); Charles Hope, "Le 'Vite' vasariane: Un esempio di autore multiplo," in *L'autore multiplo*, ed. Anna Santoni (Pisa: Scruola Normale Superiore, 2004). On precise reattribution of portions of the text, see Thomas Frangenberg, "Bartoli, Giambullari and the Prefaces to Vasari's 'Lives,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 65 (2002).

5 On the contrary, in view of the material presented here, reattribution becomes more complicated since one sees how particular themes are common to more than one of Vasari's advisors.

discourse shared amongst scholars near Vasari and in the court of Cosimo I de' Medici; by drawing out some of the threads of this discourse we are able to perceive in more depth the cultural meanings of Vasari's works.

The writings of Paul Barolsky have drawn attention to the literary qualities of Vasari's writings and, although they have been influential in this regard, his reflections on some of the biblical and spiritual dimensions of Vasari's writings have not equally been built upon by other scholars beyond the frequently repeated suggestion that the *Vite* are in part modeled after hagiographical literature.[6] Although one would be hard pressed to argue that Vasari's texts present theologically dogmatic views on art (given his many humorous interludes, and his ambivalent attitude to immorality), it is equally unlikely that no spiritual themes would seep into Vasari's texts, and indeed Barolsky has outlined many of the ways that Vasari's history of art parallels biblical and spiritual history. The layers of meaning that Barolsky finds are fascinating, and the idea that Vasari's work is saturated in spiritual themes should not itself be surprising since several of Vasari's advisors were deeply involved in spiritual discourses: Vincenzo Borghini, who indexed the first edition and contributed greatly to the second edition, was a Benedictine monk and wrote a history of, amongst many other things, the Florentine church;[7] Cosimo Bartoli, who developed

6 See Paul Barolsky, "The Theology of Vasari," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 19 (2000) as well as Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose*, on typological and hagiographical themes; also see Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, 162; Carl Goldstein, "Rhetoric and Art History in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque." Gerd Blum suggests a relationship between the periodic history of art as outlined in the Torrentiana and the Christian histories of man, deriving from Augustine and others; he also notes some striking patterns in the pagination of the book that may bear upon the spiritual interpretation of the book. See Gerd Blum, "Provvidenza e progresso: la teologia della storia nelle 'Vite' vasariane; con alcune considerazioni su periodizzazione e paginatura nell Torrentiniana," in *Le Vite del Vasari: genesi, topoi, ricezione*, ed. Katja Burzer, Charles Davis, Sabine Feser, and Alessandro Nova (Venice: Marsilio, 2010).

7 On Vincenzo Borghini's career see G. Folena, "Borghini, Vincenzo Maria," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960–). In addition to the above-mentioned sources on the multiple authors of the *Vite*, Borghini's role in the second edition has been considered in particular by Ruffini, *Art Without an Author*, chapter 3; Silvia Ginzburg, "Filologia e storia dell'arte. Il ruolo di Vincenzo Borghini nella genesi della Torrentiniana," in *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo*, ed. Eliana Carrara and Silvia Ginzburg (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2007); see also Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, chapter 5; Robert Williams, "Vincenzo Borghini and Vasari's 'Lives' " (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1988). Borghini's treatise on the history of the Florentine church was published posthumously in Vincenzo Borghini, *Discorsi di Monsignore Don Vincenzio Borghini . . . Parte Seconda. Reccati à Luce da'Deputati per suo Testamento* (Florence: Giunti, 1585).

many painting programs for Vasari, pursued an ecclesiastical career in addition to that of courtier and ambassador;[8] Silvano Razzi, whose contributions to the *Vite* are less well understood, was a Camaldulese monk and likewise an author of spiritual literature;[9] and another of Vasari's advisors, Pierfrancesco Giambullari, also pursued an ecclesiastical career.[10] Although piety cannot necessarily be imputed to being a monk or a priest, even a cursory look through an inventory of Vincenzo Borghini's books, for instance, reveals a high percentage of theological and spiritual texts.[11] We can confidently say, therefore, that Vasari's advisors were immersed in spiritual discourses or religious contexts, and could have been expected to know the spiritual concepts that will be discussed in this chapter.

Bearing this in mind, I will be exploring a series of literary and spiritual motifs regarding architecture in Vasari's writings. This study begins by looking at several linked metaphors: the first proposes that "a building is a body," a nearly ubiquitous idea in Early Modern literature. One of the most important Christian examples of this metaphor is the church, which is at once literally an edifice whilst also the spiritual body of Christ. This metaphor is elided

8 On the life of Cosimo Bartoli and his relationship with Giorgio Vasari, see Judith Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli (1503–1572): The Career of a Florentine Polymath* (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A.: 1983). On programs designed by Bartoli for Vasari, see Charles Davis, "Vasari's 'Castration of Caelus': Invention and Programme," *Fontes* 47 (2010). A selection of inventions by Bartoli are considered in Laura Corti et al., eds., *Giorgio Vasari: Principi, letterati e artisti nelle carte di Giorgio Vasari* (Florence: EDAM, 1981), 133–152.

9 On Silvano Razzi's contributions to the *Vite* see Ruffini, *Art Without an Author*, 73, 88, 187n5. See Laura Corti et al., *Giorgio Vasari: Principi, letterati e artisti*, 193–194 on mentions of Vasari in Razzi's writings. On Razzi's relationship with Benedetto Varchi, see Charles Davis, "La 'Madonna del Monasterio degl'Angeli': Danti e l'ambiente intorno a Benedetto Varchi, tra la quiete fraterna e la stanza dei 'sonetti spirituali,'" in *I grandi bronzi del Battistero. L'arte di Vincenzo Danti discepolo di Michelangelo*, ed. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi (Florence: Giunti, 2008). Razzi's writings have been catalogued in Giulio Negri, *Istoria degli scrittori fiorentini* (Ferrara: B. Pomatelli, 1722), 500–502.

10 See F. Pignatti, "Giambullari, Pierfrancesco," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960-). On his contributions to the preparation of the *Vite*, see Piero Scapecchi, "Una carta dell'esemplare riminese delle Vite del Vasari con correzioni di Giambullari: Nuove indicazioni e proposte per la torrentiniana," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 42 (1998); Frangenberg, "Bartoli, Giambullari and the Prefaces."

11 Anna Maria Testaverde Matteini, "La biblioteca erudita di don Vincenzo Borghini," in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1983), vol. 3.

with a second: that "history is a body," a metaphor that may seem less natural to modern readers. The archetype for this metaphor is once again Christ who is both human flesh while also the Word of God, and is therefore associated with Scriptural or Biblical history. Ultimately, medieval writers conflated these metaphors and posited that "history is a building": the now much-discussed memory palaces, in which medieval and Early Modern spirituals constructed mental or mnemonic palaces to memorize the facts of biblical history are perhaps the best-known manifestations of the concept of "history as a building."[12] Naturally, this last metaphor (history is a building) is contained in the first (a body is a building) in that history is conceptually related to memory, and memory is contained in the body. This chapter will look at Vasari through the lens of these interlinked metaphors, each of which is tightly woven to Christian spirituality, suggesting that Vasari posits the history of art as the rebuilding of the City of God, accomplished through the lives of the artists.

The Stones of Memory in the Palazzo Vecchio

Spiritual themes relating to architecture are evident in abundance in Giorgio Vasari's *Ragionamenti . . . sopra le inventioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel palazzo di Loro Altezze Serenissime*, written in the late 1550s and 60s, though not published until after his death in 1588.[13] As the title of the dialogue indicates, the *Ragionamenti* is a description of the cycle of paintings, begun in 1555, that Vasari painted in the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence for Duke Cosimo I de' Medici. The paintings were part of a major architectural and decorative renovation scheme undertaken to make the Palazzo a suitable ducal residence.[14] In the *Ragionamenti*, the meanings and iconographies of Vasari's paintings in the Palazzo Vecchio are described in an imaginary dialogue that occurs between

12 See Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966; repr., London: Pimlico, 2003); Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; Bolzoni, *Gallery of Memory*.

13 The timeline for the composition of the text is summarized in Roland Le Mollé's introduction to Giorgio Vasari, *Ragionamenti di Palazzo Vecchio = Entretiens du Palazzo Vecchio*, ed. Davide Canfora, trans. Roland Le Mollé (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007); see also Paola Tinagli, "Claiming a Place in History: Giorgio Vasari's 'Ragionamenti' and the Primacy of the Medici," in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). The *Ragionamenti* has been translated twice, most recently in the above-noted edition of Le Mollé and by Jerry L. Draper, "Vasari's Decoration in the Palazzo Vecchio: the Ragionamenti" (PhD thesis, University of North Carolina, 1973).

14 See note 2, above.

Duke Cosimo's son, Prince Francesco de' Medici, and Vasari himself. As they walk through the rooms of the Palace, Vasari explains the considerably complex iconography of the paintings and suggests how meanings pertaining to Duke Cosimo and the Medici family can be extrapolated from them. Judging by comments made by the Prince throughout the dialogue, the meanings suggested by Vasari were perceived as unexpected and novel but nonetheless natural or at least plausible ways of thinking about images. The discovery of meaning is repeatedly described as a pleasurable experience, the prince at one point remarking that "today, Giorgio, you are making me hear things that never did I think beneath these colors and these figures could have these significances, and it has opened in me the desire to understand all of it."[15]

Like the amazed prince, scholars have been similarly intrigued by Vasari's written descriptions of the paintings. Produced for reasons that are not fully understood, though obviously intended for publication, the *Ragionamenti* may have been written to promote the Medician iconography to people who would not otherwise have been able to see it. It has likewise been noted that the text does not follow the paintings themselves very closely, and the interpretations—which characteristically explain how the iconography of mythological stories exemplifies qualities of the Duke—give emphasis to themes not prominent in the paintings themselves.[16] This suggests that the dialogue is not an explication of the intended meanings of the paintings so much as it is the performance of courtly rhetoric, through which clients flatter their patrons with ingenious contemplations on their virtue. More recently, however, studies have explored how the text drives readings of the paintings that are in some ways coherent.[17] The *Ragionamenti* appears nonetheless to be a literary

15 "Voi mi fate oggi, Giorgio, udir cose, che non pensai mai che sotto questi colori e con queste figure fussino questi significati, e mi è acceso il desiderio di saperne di tutto il fine: or seguitate addunque." Giorgio Vasari, *Ragionamenti di Giorgio Vasari pittore ed architetto aretino sopra le invenzioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel palazzo di Loro Altezze Serenissime*, in *Le Opere di Giorgio Vasari con nuove annotazioni e commenti*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi (Florence: Sansoni, 1973), 8: 22; originally published in Florence by the Giunti press in 1588.

16 See Elizabeth McGrath, "'Il Senso Nostro': The Medici Allegory Applied to Vasari's Mythological Frescoes in the Palazzo Vecchio," in *Giorgio Vasari Tra Decorazione Ambientale e Storiografia Artistica*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1985).

17 On Medici imagery in the frescos and Cosimo's political ambitions, see Henk Th. van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his self-representation*, particularly 18–26 on the Sala degli Elementi. On the visual and spacial itinerary charted in the *Ragionamenti* see Émilie Passignat, "Vasari e i Ragionamenti in Palazzo Vecchio," in "Reverse engineering: un nuovo

work that to some degree stands alone from the paintings and is in essence a kind of celebration of the Medici and of Vasari's work.[18] The complex relationship between word and image in Vasari's *Ragionamenti* and the Palazzo Vecchio paintings cannot be fully unpacked in this chapter; rather, my concern is to describe some of the literary strategies through which Vasari attributes meanings to painted images. Part of the value of Vasari's text lies in it being one of the first in which a method of interpretation is sustained across an entire cycle of paintings for readers who would have to imagine the images.[19] If, indeed, the book was intended to make the paintings of the Palazzo known to people who would not otherwise have had access to them, the text reminds us of how sincere Leon Battista Alberti had been when he wrote that hearing a painting described verbally could "even by itself and without pictorial representation . . . give pleasure."[20]

The *Ragionamenti* begins with a discussion of the building renovations that took place in the Palazzo Vecchio, Vasari explaining to the Prince that he wished to retain as much of the original palace walls as possible, given their historic value. He emphasizes that the original palace stones give meaning to the paintings on the lower story of the palace where he had depicted the history of Florence and the Medici family; having been a material part of that history, the original walls served as an ideal support for the paintings. Vasari had, therefore, represented the history of Florence *on* the history of Florence, his paintings revealing, as will be seen, the meaning of Florentine history dormant within the palace walls. As will be demonstrated, the attribution of special historic and moral meanings to stones and architecture is a theme that permeates the *Vite* as well, and arises ultimately out of common spiritual themes.

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approccio allo studio dei grandi cicli rinascimentali," ed. Émilie Passignat and Antonio Pinelli, special issue, *Ricerche di Storia dell'arte* 91/92 (2007). On the theme of private and public life in the Palazzo Vecchio cycle, see Carole Julien-Manucci, "Vita Privata e vita pubblica in seno alla ristrutturazione del Palazzo della Signoria o nei 'Ragionamenti' di Giorgio Vasari," in *Vita pubblica e vita privata nel rinascimento: Atti del xx Convegno Internazionale* (*Chianciano Terme-Pienza 21–24 iuglio 2008*), ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2010).

18 See Paola Tinagli Baxter, "Rileggendo i 'Ragionamenti,'" in *Giorgio Vasari Tra Decorazione Ambientale e Storiografia Artistica*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1981), 93.

19 On intended readers of the book, see Tinagli, "Claiming a Place in History," 73.

20 Alberti, *On Painting*, 3.53. "Quae plane historia etiam si dum recitatur animos tenet, quatum censes eam gratiae et amoenitatis ex ipsa pictura eximii pictoris exhibuisse?" "Quale istoria se mentre che si recita piace, pensa quanto essa avesse grazia e amenità a vederla dipinta." Alberti, *Della pittura—De pictura*, 3.53.

References to the Palazzo walls appear at the beginning of the text, when Prince Francesco finds Vasari in the Palace on a particularly hot day. The prince, impressed by Vasari's work, observes that "when [he] remembers those ugly twisted rooms above and below as they were, and thinks about how [Vasari has] accommodated these old walls so well, [he is] stupefied."[21] Vasari proceeds to explain how he managed to re-order the "twisted" rooms that were there before he began his renovations and redecorations. Vasari's descriptions of the lengths to which he went in order to preserve the foundations of the palazzo are remarkable because they demonstrate an aesthetic impulse to preserve something that is aesthetically displeasing, even functionally impractical, solely for its perceived historic value. The walls of the Palace were not only the remnants of history; they contained the meaning of that history. Vasari writes that

> he merits, my Prince, great praise he that finds the body of a building disunited and made of many wills and for the use of many families and with floors high and low, and the ascensions of stairs leveled for horses and for feet. And he who reduces this without ruining much, and unifies it for the comfort of a Prince, the head of a republic, making an elder [building] become young, and the dead come to life; these are the miracles that make the people know what things are possible from the impossible, and from false to true. And nor would it have been possible over a new wall . . . to paint the stories of this honorable Republic, for there would not be those stones that are a testimony to so many great things as are these old walls, those which have stayed firm for the work and the labor.[22]

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21 "Voi fate bene, che in vero avete fatto in brieve tempo volare questo lavoro, e quando mi ricordo di quelle stanzaccie torte di sotto e di sopra che ci erano, e che vi sete sì bene accommodato di questi muri vecchi, io mi stupisco." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 11.

22 "e merita, Signor Principe mio, più lode chi trova un corpo d'una fabbrica disunito e da molte volontà fatto a caso e per uso di più famiglie ed alto di piani e bassi e con buona salita di scale piane per a cavallo ed a piè, e lo riduca senza non rovinare molto, e unito e capace alla commodità d'un principe, capo d'una republica, facendo un vecchio diventar giovane, ed un morto vivo; che sono i miracoli che fanno cognoscere alle genti che cosa sia dall'impossibile al possibile e dal falso al vero; perchè ogni ingegno mediocre arebbe saputo di nuovo creare qualcosa, e saria stato bene, ma il racconciar le cose guaste, senza rovina, in questo consiste maggiore ingegno: nè si poteva sopra a mura nuove, volendo con tanto ornamento dipigner le storie di questa Republica onoratissima, per non essere stati que'sassi testimoni a tante gran cose come questi di queste mura vecchi, le quali poi che sono state ferme alle fatiche ed a'travagli, debbono per la costanza loro essere ornate ed indorate, come Quella vede e crede, da che fur murate l'anno 1298 per fino a questo dì." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 14–15.

What is of interest here is not the ends to which Vasari writes, which were in part, presumably, to flatter the Duke, but rather the means or rhetoric he uses to accomplish this.[23] In Vasari's estimation, the walls of the Palazzo are such a testament to the history of Florence that it would not even be possible "over a new wall . . . to paint the stories of this honorable Republic." In essence, the body of the Palazzo Vecchio—that is, its walls and its foundations—were elided with what Vasari saw as the actual moral ideology of the republic and its history.

To discuss the walls and their moral importance, Vasari conflates a number of traditional ideas involving architecture. The first is the metaphor "the memory is a wall." Vasari implies that the palazzo walls are memorials to history when he writes that Duke Cosimo was "not wanting to alter the foundation and maternal walls of [the Palazzo]," because they had been with Florence "from [its] origin to his new government."[24] There is a long tradition of memories being likened metaphorically to walls. An early example is found in Aristotle, who writes that memories are like walls in that some surfaces retain impressions (memories) better than others. In the memories of older people it is difficult to impress new memories because their minds are "like . . . old walls in buildings," and, therefore, owing "to the hardness of the receiving surface, the impression does not penetrate."[25] This Aristotelian use derives partly from humoral theory, in which the healthy body is a balance of the four humors of the body; in a body that is too wet, memories cannot be formed properly, in the same way that water, impressed by a form, cannot retain the impression of the form once the form has been taken away.[26] Similarly, being too dry (like a crumbling wall; people in old age were thought to be more dry) was not conducive to forming memories either. St. Thomas Aquinas uses the metaphor in his commentary on Aristotle's text, in which he notes that "old buildings easily collapse," though "physical things that, like a stone . . . receive an impression slowly and with difficulty [will nonetheless] retain it well."[27] The implication

23 For further discussion of this theme, and Cosimo's political goals, see Henk Th. van Veen, *view details Cosimo I de' Medici and his self-representation*, 14.

24 "che il duca arebbe saputo, e potuto farlo felicissimamente, se il rispetto di non volere alterare i fondamenti e le mura maternali di questo luogo, per avere esse, con questa forma vecchia, dato origine al suo governo nuovo." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 14.

25 Aristotle, *On Memory*, 450b–450b5.

26 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle "On Memory and Recollection,"* trans. John Burchill, in *The Medieval Craft of Memory: an anthology of texts and pictures*, ed. Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 166.

27 Aquinas, *On Memory and Recollection*, 157, 167. "videmus autem in corporalibus quod illa que difficulter et tarde recipiunt inpressionem bene retinent eam, sicut lapis, que vero

is that once a memory is etched onto a stone it is most likely there for good. Likewise, Vasari's old walls are described as an accumulation of memories: they have retained their memories well, as they are a hard surface, though they are currently in disorder and crumbling with age.

The metaphor of the wall as memory is related to the metaphor of "a building is a body," which is stated more explicitly in *Ragionamenti*. Like a body, he writes, the old walls of the Palazzo are "bones/stones" that he has accommodated with "new order" so that they may be "one body together" and so that he may "cure" them.[28] Renovating the Palace so that it can accommodate its present function allows it to "live" as a servant to the Republic, "making an elder become young" again, whilst also continuing to express its "testimony" to Florentine history. Naturally, both of these metaphors ("the body is a building" and "the memory is a wall") contain one another in the same way that the body contains memory. Hence, having a healthy memory (strong walls, not crumbling ones) that could retain memories (and exist as testimony to these memories) was tantamount to having a healthy body (building) that was not sick (poorly formed). One might say, therefore, that Vasari employs these two metaphors to describe how he took a building that contained many important memories, and re-ordered it so that it became a fitting structure for the historical foundation upon which it lies.

As noted above, the "building as body" metaphor is popular throughout the Renaissance: in *De re aedificatoria*, Leon Battista Alberti conjures the metaphor to express how renovators of old buildings are like physicians who cure diseases.[29] Similarly, Leonardo styles himself as a physician when he writes

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de facili recipiunt non retinent bene, sicut aqua; et quia memorari nichil est aliud quam bene conservare semel accepta, inde est quod illi qui sunt tardi ad recipiendum, bene retinent recepta, quod est bene memorari." "secundo autem assignavit causam ex naturali complexione: vel quia in aliquibus habundat humor aqueus qui est frigidus et humidus et ideo disperguntur de facili in eis inpressiones fantasmatum, sicut faciliter dilabuntur antiqua edificia; vel quia in aliquibus habundat humor terrestris, qui propter duriciam non recipiunt inpressionem." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita, t. 45/2: Sentencia libri De sensu et sensato cuius secundus tractatus est De memoria et reminiscencia* (Rome: Commissio Leonina, 1884), 104, 114.

28 "e che sopra queste ossa con nuovo ordine si vadiano accommodando in più luoghi appartamenti e molte abitazioni varie e utili e magnifiche e ridurre le membra sparte di queste stanze vecchie in un corpo insieme." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 16. This theme has also recently been noted by Julien-Manucci, "Vita privata e vita pubblica."

29 Particularly in the tenth book, chapter 1, Alberti refers to the renovator of a building as a physician curing disease.

a letter describing how to cure the Cathedral of Milan.[30] The concept of the building as a body that needs to be cured ultimately descends from a long tradition in classical and Christian literature in which the symmetry, beauty and functionality of the body are held up as models for buildings.[31] The body/building metaphor occurs in this form, for example, in the preface on architecture of the *Vite*, when Vasari writes that parts of a building must be "like human bodies, equally ordered and distributed."[32] Related to this notion is the Christian belief that the body is like a building in that the foundation of the soul is built upon faith in Christ. This popular variation derives from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians, 3:9–11), in which the apostle writes that we are all "God's building," advising us to "choose with care how to build" upon the foundation "that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ."[33] The foundations of our soul, whether "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw," will eventually "become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire and the fire will test what sort of work each has done" (1 Corinthians 3:12–13).[34] By comparing the body to a building, St. Paul suggests that the moral strength provided to the body by Christ makes its foundation strong like a building. Barolsky has suggested that these passages of St. Paul can be a lens through which to read Vasari's typological evocation of the architecture of Brunelleschi and Michelangelo, writing that "Brunelleschi, the 'new Saint Paul,' built upon the foundations laid by Saint Paul, and Michelangelo . . . built upon the foundations laid by Brunelleschi."[35] As will become clear, the relevance of St. Paul goes even further, and Vasari draws on this Christian variation of the body/building concept to conjure the

30 See Kemp, *Marvellous Works*, 88.

31 The classical heritage of this concept and its interpretation in Alberti's hands has recently been discussed by Marvin Trachtenberg, "Building Outside Time in Alberti's 'De re aedificatoria,' " 128–131.

32 "le quali, per esser membra dell'edificio, è di necessità che'elle siano, come i corpi humani egualmente ordinate, & distribuite, secondo le qualità, & varietà di fabriche." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 30.

33 "Dei enim sumus adiutores: Dei agricultura estis, Dei aedificatio estis." "Fundamentum enim aliud nemo potest ponere praeter id, quod positum est, qui est Christus Iesus." (Latin Vulgate)

34 "Si quis autem superaedificat supra fundamentum hoc, aurum, argentum, lapides pretiosos, ligna, foenum, stipulam, uniuscuiusque opus manifestum erit: Dies enim declarabit, quia in igne revelabitur: et uniuscuisuque opus quale sit, ignis probabit." (Latin Vulgate). See Mary Carruthers, "The Poet as Master Builder: Composition and Locational Memory in the Middle Ages," *New Literary History* 24 (1993), 890.

35 See Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose*, 51, see also 53 on related ideas concerning Psalm 118.

foundations of the Palazzo Vecchio as virtuous material that he must retain in order to cure and reorder the building, making the virtue of the material evident.

The virtuous foundations of buildings are frequently noted in Vasari's *Vite* in the 1550 edition and then further emphasized in the 1568 version. For instance, the importance of architectural foundations is developed in the biographies of the various architects who were in some way involved in the building of the Palazzo Vecchio. In the 1568 edition, Vasari includes a biography of Arnolfo di Cambio (who he calls Arnolfo di Lapo), praising him for incorporating the church of Santa Reparata and other churches into the foundations of the cathedral, and lauding the wide and deep foundations that supported Brunelleschi's dome.[36] This story is contrasted with Arnolfo's contribution to the unusually shaped Palazzo Vecchio, about which Vasari is less complimentary. He blames members of the Signoria for forcing Arnolfo to use an asymmetrical plot of land, forbidding him to use the grounds that had once belonged to the Ghibelline Uberti family, thus compromising the shape of the structure.[37] The Duomo therefore succeeds because Arnolfo incorporated the foundations and the histories of many churches into one, whereas the Palazzo Vecchio fails for trying to deny history and, moreover, the building is founded not on concord and unity but on political strife. Foundations must be, as St. Paul exhorted, built on Christian faith, which implies naturally that part of Vasari's virtue as a renovator lay in his desire to harmonize the palazzo's history, just as Arnolfo incorporated the earliest roots of Florence into the Cathedral, emphasizing communal concord.

Similarly, in the first age of history, the architects Nicola and Giovanni Pisano are also celebrated for creating good foundations, especially for having

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36 "Et quello, che in cio fu sopra tutte l'altre cose maraviglioso, fu questo, che, incorporando oltre S. Reparata, altre piccole Chiese, e case, che l'erano intorno, nel fare le pianta, che è bellissima, fece con tanta diligenza, e giudizio fare i fondamenti di si gran fabrica larghi, e profondi, riempiendogli di buona materia, cio è di ghiaia, & calcina, e di pietre grosse infondo, la dove ancora la piazza si chiama lungo i fondamenti, che eglino hanno benissimo potuto, come hoggi si vede, reggere il peso della gran machina della Cupola, che Filippo di Ser Brunellesco le voltò sopra." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 94.

37 "Ma non potette gia come, che Mag. e grande lo disegnasse, dargli quella perfezzione, che l'arte, & il giudizio suo richiedevano: percioche essendo state disfatte; e mandate per terra le case de gl'Uberti rubelli del popolo Fiorentino, e ghibellini, e fattone piazza, potette tanto la sciocca caparbietà d'alcuni, che non ehbbe forza Arnolfo, per molte ragioni, che alegasse, di far si, che gli fusse conceduto almeno mettere il palazzo in isquadra, per non havere voluto chi governava, che in modo nessuno il palazzo havesse i fondamenti in sul terreno degl'Uberti rebelli . . ." Ibid., 1: 95.

established the practice of building on a foundation of piers.[38] Their contribution to the renovation of Florence is further established when Vasari attributes to Nicola the method for demolishing the towers of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, which had hitherto stood as monuments to pride, in the barbarous style common at the time; thus, as buildings founded on discord, they needed to be removed (admittedly contradicting the earlier edict that the Palazzo Vecchio fails for denying history).[39] In general, however, the brothers are credited with reworking the works of others in a more orderly style.[40] The background to these comments on foundations is, I believe, Augustinian ideas on the city of God and the earthly city: in the earthly city a society of men pit themselves against one another to their own detriment.[41] Through these comments, therefore, Vasari suggests that the virtue or strength of a building has a special relationship to the conditions upon which it was founded, echoing the tenor of St. Paul's formulation. In addition to the theme of concord and strength in faith, Vasari conceives of the historic building as a quasi-relic. This idea emerges in the *vita* of Antonio da San Gallo, who is many times credited with restoring the foundations of buildings.[42] In a passage that greatly resembles Vasari's comments on the Palazzo Vecchio, the aretine biographer notes that Antonio is unlike architects who have the fortune to "make a new work, or raise a building from its foundations" and therefore can "conduct it to perfection"; nonetheless, in restoring the Church of the Madonna in Loreto, Antonio "resuscitated a dead [thing], accomplishing that which is almost impossible."[43] Readers attuned to

38 "Fece similment Nicola in Pisa molti altri palazzi, e Chiese; e fu il primo, essendosi smarrito il buon modo di fabricare, che misse in uso fondar gl'edifizii a Pisa in su i pilastri, e sopra quelli voltare Archi, havendo prima palificato sotto i detti pilastri: perche facendosi altrimenti, rotto il primo piano sodo del fondamento, le muraglie calavano sempre. Dove il palificare rende sicurissimo l'edifizio, si come la sperienza ne dimostra." Ibid., 1: 99.

39 "Havendo al tempo di Nicola cominciato i Fiorentini a gettare per terra molte torri, giastate fatte di maniera barbara per tutta la Città, perche meno venissero i popoli, mediante quelle, offesi nelle zuffe, che spesso fra guelfi, e ghibellini si facevano, o perche fusse maggior sicurta del publico . . ." Ibid., 1: 100.

40 For instance, Nicola enlarges the Duomo of Volterra, the church and convent of the Friar Preachers in Viterbo; Giovanni completes with better order the Sapienza Nuova of Perugia. Within the lives of Nicola and Giovanni and Anrolfo, there are many instances of stories of restoration, often emphasizing the retention of the original structure.

41 See, for instance, Augustine, *City of God*, 15.4: "the earthly city is often divided against itself by lawsuits, wars and strife, and by victories which either bring death or are themselves short-lived."

42 Antonio, for instance, repairs the foundations of the Papal Loggie and the church of the Florentines in Rome.

43 "La quale opera merita certo di essere celebrata, per la migliore che Antonio facesse gia mai, e non senza ragionevole cagione: percio che coloro che fanno di nuovo alcun'opera,

the spiritual dimensions of Vasari's words could hardly miss that his topic is a church famous for housing an edifice that itself is a relic, namely the house in which the Virgin received the annunciation, preserved in Loreto. The conflation of foundation and relics appears again in a discussion of San Francesco in Assisi in which Vasari describes how the lower church is the resting place of St. Francis, whereby the foundation of the church is elided with the actual holy presence of the Saint.[44]

Vasari's Palazzo Vecchio is thus the secularization of the long-held idea that the foundation of a church must be built on holy piety: in the case of the Palazzo, the holy presence is simply history itself. Tellingly, Vasari's view of history is shared by one of his principle advisors, Vincenzo Borghini. Scholars have discussed Borghini's historical method in order to shed light on the creation of the 1568 edition of the *Vite*, in which greater emphasis is given to the preservation of historical material and the consultation of authentic sources.[45] In his own historical writings, Borghini was likewise interested in preserving the historical foundations of Florence, and in some of his writings the method through which this was practiced illuminates the moral dimensions of foundations and history in Vasari's writings. In a treatise published posthumously on the history of the Florentine church, Borghini recorded many things pertaining to the history of Florentine churches, including some comments on their structures, and in fact part of Borghini's historical method included the analysis of archaeological remains of still-standing churches.[46] There are passages in his

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ò la levano dai fondamenti, hanno faculta di potere alzarsi, abbassarsi & condurla a quella perfezzione, che vogliono e sanno migliore, senza essere da alcuna cosa impediti, il che non aviene a chi ha da regolare, ò restaurare le cose cominciate da altri: e mal condotte, ò dall'artefice, ò dagl'avenimenti della fortuna: onde si puo dire; che Antonio risuscitasse un morto, e facesse quello, che quasi non era possibile." Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 318.

44 "Misero poi dinanzi alla capella Maggiore della chiesa di sotto l'altare, e sotto quello quando fu finito, collocarono con solennissima traslazione il corpo di S. Francesco." Ibid., 1: 92.

45 See Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, chapter 5; Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 29–33; Ruffini, *Art Without an Author*, chapter 3. See also studies noted above regarding differences between the first and second edition. Borghini counseled Vasari not to give undue importance to the biographical material of an artist's life and to focus rather on the achievements that made them worthy of historic rememberance. This is stated in a well-known letter, recently discussed by Ruffini, *Art Without an Author*, 95; Williams, *Art, Theory and Culture*, 30–31.

46 Borghini's treatise was requested in 1573 by cardinal Alessandro de' Medici; see G. Folena, "Borghini, Vincenzio Maria," 684. See also Maria Fubini Leuzzi, "Erudizione, ideologia e politica nel 'Trattato della Chiesa e Vescovi fiorentini' di Vincenzio Borghini," in *Testi, immagini e filologia nel XVI secolo*, ed. Eliana Carrara and Silvia Ginzburg (Pisa: Scuola

book concerning how bodies of men (either saints or simply noble, pious men) were interred into the walls or foundations of churches, discussing how some had been removed during renovations.[47] Moreover, a lengthy part of Borghini's discourse argues that the church of San Lorenzo had been consecrated by Saint Ambrose, thus indicating a similar preoccupation with establishing the noble origins and foundation of the church.[48] Reading Vasari's *Ragionamenti* in light of Borghini's history, therefore, amplifies our understanding of history in Vasari's literary circle, and reveals how historical foundations were valued for sharing in the virtue of those who built those foundations, and whose own bodies had become part of the edifice's material structure.

As the above examples make clear, Vasari and Borghini elide virtue with history in a way that is not yet explicit in St. Paul (though, as will be seen below, this also resonates with the Christian tradition), such that a foundation requires preservation simply because it is part of history. In Vasari's own

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Normale Superiore, 2007). Borghini's archeological process is discussed by Nicolai Rubinstein, "Vasari's Painting of 'The Foundation of Florence' in the Palazzo Vecchio," in *Essays in the History of Architecture Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. Douglas Fraser, Howard Hibbard, and Milton J. Lewine (London: Phaidon, 1967); Zygmunt Waźbiński, "Le polemiche intorno al battistero fiorentino nel cinquecento," in *Filippo Brunelleschi: La sua opera e il suo tempo* (Florence: Centro Di, 1980), vol. 2.

47 "... e fu sepolto alla maggior Chiesa l'anno 1101. ancorche di sua sepoltura (ch'io sappia) non ci si vegga vestigio alcuno. E questo può agevolmente dalla rinnovazione, che si fece della maggior Chiesa già presso a 300 anni essere avvenuto, quando tutte le sepolture, che vi erano, delle piu antiche, e nobili famiglie, e molte arche d'huomini chiari furono levate, che poi sono per questa occasione ite male. E quì non vò lasciare che non è mancato chi creda quell'Arca di marmo che con l'arme d'una Aquila: si vede ancora suso alto a canto all porta, che guarda la via del Cocomero, potere essere di questo Currado: il che mi fece venir voglia non ha molto di vedere, se se ne fusse potuto ritrovar nulla, e fattola aprire si trovò divisa in tre vani, & in uno da un canto certe poche ossa, in quel di mezo un pezzo di Cranio in sottilissimo Zendado involto, che si mostrava di persona assai membruta, ne cosa altra vi era che potesse dare indizio, o lume dell'huomo, e mi cadde nell'animo allora, che ella fusse stata di tre, e ridotta per l'occasione di quel mutamento in una, e per la degnità delle persone nella nuova muraglia rimessa, e l'ossa col tempo itesene in polvere. E non è forse quella l'opinione molto dal verisimile discoto, dacchè non si può sicuramente dire dal vero, poichè di tante, quella sola vi è lasciata: che da indizio, che di persona di conto ella fusse." See Borghini, *Discorsi*, 473.

48 "Or delle sopradette la più sicura, e più antica, e come io dico, senza dubbio la principale è S. Lorenzo con titolo di Basilica, la quale Chiesa, come nel principio largamente si è discorso, consecrata per mano del glorioso, e chiarissimo lume della Chiesa S. Ambrogio, fu per ciò chiamata la Basilica Ambrosiana." Ibid., 409–10. See also Fubini Leuzzi, "Erudizione, ideologia e politica," 466.

description of historical writing, the process itself is likened to the process of renovation, which preserves foundations in order to reveal the moral and spiritual significance of history. Vasari states that his purpose in writing the *Vite* was to preserve the memory of great artists from being ruined like a fallen edifice. Comparing the history of art with a building that needs preservation, and to a growing body, he writes that he has seen how the history of art "from small beginnings . . . conducts itself to the highest heights, and how from a grade so noble it declines into extreme ruin, and consequently . . . [it is like] a human body [which] has its birth, growth, aging and death."[49] Furthermore, if it happens at some point that art "newly incurs the disorder of ruin, [his] labors [in writing the history of art] . . . can maintain their life, or at least give spirit to the most elevated minds."[50] It is worth noting, in passing, that similar themes occur in Boccaccio's *Genealogia degli Dei antichi*, the anthology of mythology that Vasari's advisor, Cosimo Bartoli, drew upon to develop the program for the Palazzo Vecchio. In this book Boccaccio conceives of his own reordering of the mythology and poetry of antiquity in similar terms: as an attempt to reorder a body so as to reveal its hidden truth. Boccaccio writes that classical myths had been "torn limb from limb and scattered among the rough and desert places of antiquity," and so he set himself the task of arranging their "members in . . . order" so as to "penetrate the hearts of the Ancients" and "bring to light and life . . . minds long since removed in death."[51]

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49 "I quali havendo veduto inche modo ella da piccol principio, si conducesse a la somma altezza; e come da grado si nobile precipitasse in ruina estrema: e per conseguente la natura di questa arte, simile a quella dell'altre, che come i corpi humani, hanno, il nascere, il crescere, lo invecchiare, & il morire; potranno hora piu facilmente conoscere il progresso della sua rinascita; & di quella stessa perfezzione, dove ella è risalita ne' tempi nostri." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 81.

50 "Et a cagione ancora, che se mai (il che non acconsenta Dio) accadesse per alcun tempo, per la trascuraggine degli huomini, o per la malignita de' secoli, o pure per ordine de' cieli, i quali non pare, che voglino le cose di quaggiù mantenersi molto in uno essere; ella incorresse di nuovo, nel medesimo disordine di rovina, possino queste fatiche mie, qualunche elle si siano, (se elle però saranno degne di piu benigna fortuna) per le cose discorse innanzi, & per quelle che hanno da dirsi, mantenerla in vita; o almeno dare animo, à i piu elevati ingegni di provederle migliori aiuti." Ibid.

51 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 11, 13. "Porro, princeps eximie, uti componendo membra deveniam, sic sensus absconditos sub duro cortice enucleando procedam, non tamen ad unguem iuxta intentionem fingentium fecisse promittam. Quis enim tempestate nostra antiquorum queat terebrare pectora et mentes excutere, in vitam aliam iam diu a mortali segregates, et, quos habuere, sensus elicere?" Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium libri*, 8. See Osgood, note 1 to preface in *Boccaccio on Poetry*, in which he suggests that Boccaccio is imitating the proem to Gregory's *Moralia on the Book of Job*.

If the foundations of the Palazzo Vecchio expressed a noble virtue, renovation of the building was a reflection of Duke Cosimo's superior style of thinking. The same style of thinking that sought to preserve the memory and history of the Palazzo, would also, in turn, govern the city virtuously. Vasari writes that the Duke "would have known [how], and could have [destroyed the Palazzo] easily, if [not for] the respect to want not to alter the foundation and the maternal walls of this place."[52] The Duke, he asserts, would not take the easy way out: "even in things difficult and imperfect, he has known to use facility and perfection and the good use of architecture, in the same way that he has also done in the governing of the city and of the dominion."[53] The reorganizing of the palace thus became a metaphor for the reorganization of the whole city: it was a mental struggle that required a particular style of thinking to resolve it. Just as the Duke struggled to reorder the city of Florence, Vasari sought to reorganize the literal pieces of the palazzo into a coherent truth to express the virtue contained in those pieces.

He also sought to bring to life an essentially Florentine spirit that had been left dormant in the Palazzo walls. Much has been said recently on the exaltation of Tuscan and Etruscan heritage in Vasari's writings and those of his literary colleagues at the Accademia Fiorentina.[54] Vasari suggests that Florentine architecture contains an essentially noble quality when he says that the Tuscan manner of building was never fully overtaken by the Barbaric manner of architecture. Even though the Barbaric manner "deformed [architecture] from the first antique order, [the Florentines] reserved always the squaring of the stones, and made the walls with diligence, with the crossing of the vaults with the antiquity of the Romans."[55] This idea is present in the preface on the materials

52 "Il duca arebbe saputo, e potuto farlo felicissimamente, se il rispetto di non volere alterare i fondamenti e le mura maternali di questo luogo, per avere esse, con questa forma vecchia, dato origine al suo governo nuovo." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 14.

53 "anche nelle cose difficili ed imperfette, che ha saputo usare la facilità e la perfezione ed il buono uso dell'architetura, così come anche ha fatto nel modo del governo della città e del dominio." Ibid., 14.

54 See Frangenberg, "The Prefaces to Vasari's 'Lives,'" 248; On the Tuscan architectural order in Alberti, Vasari and Bartoli, see Alina Payne, "Vasari, Architecture, and Origins of Historicizing Art," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 40 (2001), 65–71. More generally, on the origins of the Etruscans in Florentine myth, see Giovanni Cipriani, *Il mito etrusco nel rinascimento fiorentino* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1980), especially chapter 4; see also Alessandro d'Alessandro, "Il mito dell'origine 'aramea' di Firenze in un trattatello di Giambattista Gelli," *Archivio storico italiano* 138 (1980).

55 "Ma ancora che fusse il murar barbaro e disforme dal primo ordine antico, riservarono sempre la quadratura delle pietre, il muralle con diligenza, e le crociere delle volte con la antichità de'Romani." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 13.

of architecture in the *Vite*, where Vasari discusses the fortitude of the stones, which he calls simply the *pietra forte*, used to construct the Palazzo Vecchio and other notable Florentine buildings, stating that both moderns and Goths had used the same material; the stones, therefore, had a special relationship to the Tuscan territory that had resisted political upheaval.[56] Vasari even attributes to the stones a kind of intentionality whereby they—much like saint's relics—were able to desire certain things to happen or not to happen. They approved of Cosimo il Vecchio, for instance, and by recognizing his patriotism and *giudizio* they remained "devoted" to him.[57] Duke Cosimo is furthermore identified with stone itself, when Vasari interprets the mythological Giove allegorically as a figure of the Duke for having been substituted with a stone upon presentation to his father, Saturn, "denoting . . . something stable and eternal, since hard stones are a material that are engraved with every sort of work, for which they conserve more antiquity and memories, than other materials."[58] If the stones, in Vasari's discussion, appear to have their own

56 "Cavasi per diversi luoghi la pietra forte, la qual regge all'acqua, al sole, al ghiaccio, & a ogni tormento; & vuol tempo a lavorarla, ma si conduce molto bene; & non v'è molte gran saldezze. Della quale se n'è fatto, e per i Gotthi, & per i moderni i piu belli edifici, che siano per la Toscana . . . Et di questa sorte pietra è murato il palazgio de' Signori, la loggia, Orsan Michele e il di dentro di tutto il corpo di S. Maria del Fiore . . ." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 35. On the virtue of hard stones in Vasari's preface on architecture, see Claudia Conforti, *Vasari architetto* (Milan: Electa, 1993), 7–38. Conforti notes the importance of stones in the Florentine cultural context, citing for instance the writings of Agostino del Riccio, *Delle lodi delle pietre*. Cosimo Bartoli also makes various comments on the kinds of stones used in Florence for building in his *Ragionamenti accademici* (Venice, 1567), 2v–3r. It has been argued that Bartoli's text was written around 1550–52 by Charles Davis, "Cosimo Bartoli and the Portal of Sant'Apollonia by Michelangelo," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 19 (1975), 266. Frangenberg, "The Prefaces to Vasari's 'Lives,' " has suggested that Bartoli was responsible for the majority of the preface on architecture, 254–255. On Bartoli's *Ragionamenti*, see also Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli*, chapter 13. Further on the stones in the Palazzo Vecchio, see Muccini and Cecchi, *Le stanze del principe in Palazzo Vecchio*, 22–40.

57 "dove cognoscendo queste pietre in nel gran Cosimo vecchio il giudizio, la bontà e l'amore che egli portò a loro, ed alla sua patria, sempre li furono devote; sperando un giorno che in che si doveva rinnovare il suo nome, dovesse un giorno illustrarlo, rinnovarlo e rimbellirlo, e con lo splendore degli ornamenti che si dovevano fare, avessi poi aver fama del più raro palazzo e del più commodo e singulare, che alcun altro fusse stato fabricato dalla grandezza di republica o principe che sia stato mai." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 15.

58 ". . . Opi, che l'ha partorito, perché e' non sia divorata da Saturno, gli presenta in cambio di Giove un sasso, denotando che ha generato cosa stabile ed eterna, conciossiachè le pietre

will, they had nonetheless been subject to many conflicting governments. The virtue of Cosimo I, is that he recognizes the "love and faith of this place" despite the discord evident in the stones, which occurred due to "the mutation of past governments;" despite the discord, Cosimo I was nonetheless able to make of them "as he has made of this government: of many wills into one alone, which is his."[59]

As noted above, the Etruscan ethnocentric view evident in these passages resonates with the larger cultural agenda pursued by Duke Cosimo. The themes in the opening pages of Vasari's *Ragionamenti*—the virtuous foundations of history, the concord forged by princes, the malleable stones of Tuscany—touch upon ideas important to those in Vasari's literary circle; to the end of glorifying Florence, her ruler and her servants, these writers use traditional metaphors and motifs which carry shades of spiritual meaning. By reading these texts in light of one another, it is possible to see how the historic stones of the Palazzo are elided ideologically with St. Paul's foundation of Christ, thus keeping the soul strong.

The Architecture of Allegory in Vasari and Hugh of St. Victor

The relationship between material objects and the abstract, spiritual ideas that they embody—observed in Vasari's description of the history implanted in the Palazzo walls—is echoed again in the very painting program devised by Vasari for the entire palace. As noted above, Vasari states that the palace walls contained the meanings depicted in the paintings of the history of Florence on the first floor walls; as will be discussed below, later in the dialogue Vasari declares that the meanings of the mythological paintings on the second story correspond to the history paintings beneath them. Thus, the correspondences between the paintings on the two floors echo the correspondences between history painting and stones. Though some historians have argued that such a relationship is

dure son materia che vi si intaglia drento ogni sorta di lavoro, e per quelle si conserva più l'antichità e le memorie, che in altra materia . . ." Ibid., 39.

59 "Dove, mosso Sua Eccellenza da sì potenti cagioni, non ha mai volute che nessuno architetto dia disegni che abbino a torgli la forma vecchia . . . per ricognoscere l'amore e la fede di questo luogo." Ibid., 16 ". . . che mostranci il medesimo ordine che era in loro per la mutazione de' governi passati; dove il Duca nostro adesso mostra appunto in questa fabrica il bel modo che ha trovato di ricorreggerla, per far di lei, come ha fatto in questo governo, di tanti voleri un solo, che è appunto il suo." Ibid., 16.

a fanciful idea conjured up by Vasari after the program had been invented, this section explores the intellectual, spiritual and literary precedents for Vasari's remarkable scheme.[60] Even if Vasari had not originally intended the images to be interpreted in this way, it is unlikely that he would have tried to unify the program with a scheme that would have struck readers of the *Ragionamenti* as totally implausible. My purpose, therefore, is to see how Vasari's program is in keeping with the attitudes and habits of Renaissance viewers.

I will begin with the second story of the palace, where Vasari painted images of personifications and many figures taken from classical mythology. Going through the meanings of these mythologies and personifications one by one, Vasari tried to show how each could be taken to represent some aspect of Duke Cosimo. For instance, in Vasari's *Allegory of Justice* (Figure 21), Justice "represses the wicked and rewards the good," and is depicted as a woman who,

FIGURE 21 *Giorgio Vasari*, Allegory of Justice (*1555*). *Sala degli Elementi, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: ALINARI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

60 See McGrath, " 'Il Senso Nostro,' " 120.

among other things, "wears armor on her head but not on her chest, and holds the shield of Medusa on her arm."[61]

Francesco asks how these attributes signify Justice, and Vasari replies that her helmet, for example, is made "of gold and of iron; [since] iron rusts and gold does not, this denotes that it is necessary that the just judge not have an infected brain. The chest [of Justice] is unarmed as such, that is [to say] clean of passion."[62] Vasari then explains how the image represents the virtues of the Medici family in various ways: the helmet is like Cosimo I; other details are related to the elders of the Medici family.[63]

These inventions please the Prince, but he is surprised when Vasari informs him that the mythological paintings on the top floor of the Palazzo are related to the stories of the history of Florence depicted in the rooms on the floor below. "In the rooms and chambers below [at ground level]," Vasari says, "the stories of the terrestrial Gods of the illustrious house of the Medici"[64] are painted, whereas on the second floor "above and situated in high places [are] the stories of the origins of the celestial Gods."[65] Within these two schemes "there is nothing above painted that does not correspond to [that which is] below [it]."[66] Therefore, just as the paintings of the history of Florence express the historical meanings of the walls over which they are painted, likewise the allegorical paintings on the top floor express the meanings of the paintings of the history of Florence on the floor below.

The above and below correspondences resonate with many sources relevant to Vasari, though ultimately I plan to show how they harmonize most meaningfully with spiritual motifs that arise from St. Paul's foundation of faith.

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61 "è la Iustizia, che reprime i tristi e premi ai buoni. P. Sta bene; ma ditemi, perchè ha ella armato il capo e non il petto, ed ha quello scudo di Medusa in braccio?" Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 24. The use of allegory in Vasari's work has recently been discussed by Antonella Fenech Kroke, *Giorgio Vasari: La fabrique de l'allégorie* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011); the results of this study have appeared too late to incorporate into my discussion.

62 "Sua Eccellenza ha sempre armato la testa con quell'elmo, che è d'oro e di ferro; il ferro arrugginische e l'oro no; il che denota esser necessario che il giusto giudice abbi il cervello non infetto, così netto di passione." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 24.

63 "Il significato loro è, che la bianca è posta per la Fede, la rossa per la Carità, e la verde per la Speranza, che deve nascere nella mente del giusto giudice, che furono imprese de' vostri vecchi di casa Medici, dove ell'è sempre fiorita . . ." Ibid., 25.

64 "nelle sale e camere di sotto le storie dipinte delli Dei terresteri della illustrissima casa de'Medici." Ibid., 85.

65 "noi abbiamo messo di sopra e situato in que'luogi alti le storie e l'origine delli Dei celesti." Ibid.

66 "perchè non è niente di sopra dipinto, che qui di sotto non corrisponda." Ibid.

To begin unpacking Vasari's sources, we may look in more depth at the room with which the dialogue begins on the second floor, the *Sala degli Elementi*. Vasari explains to the Prince that he was particularly concerned with the room's low ceiling and he describes how, by removing the ceiling and exposing the beams of the roof, he was able to raise the ceiling of the room without creating a new roof. Vasari continues to describe how, in the spaces around the beams, he divided the surface to be fitted with paintings. In conclusion, he writes that

> my drawings were divided in this form, because [I was] wanting to treat of the [subject of the] four elements *in that way—that is, in that way in which it is permitted for the paintbrush to treat of the things of philosophy spoken in fables; due* [*to the fact*] *that poetry and painting, as sisters, use the same terms; and if in this room and in others I call these, my inventions by the names of the fabled Gods, we are permitted in this way to imitate the ancients, who beneath these names concealed allegorically the concepts of philosophy. Now, as I have said, wanting here to treat of the elements* . . . on the ceiling, or sky, it seemed to me [correct] to paint the stories of the element of the Air [emphasis mine].[67]

Vasari thus associates painterly "allegory"—the process of concealing "the concepts of philosophy" beneath figural representation—with the poet's fables; what is permissible in poetry is permissible in painting because they "use the same terms" (*termini*).[68] Vasari does not make clear what these terms are, though it might be supposed that both painting and poetry ask their audi-

67 "Così questo mio disegno lo spartii in questa forma, perchè volendo trattare de'quattro elementi, in quella maniera però che è lecito al pennello trattare le cose della filosofia favoleggiando; atteso che la poesia e la pitture usano come sorelle i medesimi termini; e se in questa sala ed in altre vo dichiarando queste mie invenzioni sotto nome di favolosi dei, siami lecito in questo imitar gli antichi, i quali sotto questi nomi nascondevano allegoricamente i concetti della filosofia. Or volendo, come ho detto, qui trattare delli elementi, i quali, con le proprietà loro avevano a dare a questa sala, per le storie che ci ho dipinto, il nome, chiamandosi LA SALA DELLI ELEMENTI, così in questo palco o cielo mi parve di dipignervi le storie dello elemento dell'Aria." Ibid., 18–19.

68 Note that "termini" has been translated as "terms" rather than as "ends" for the reason that in Vasari's *Lives* when the word is used in the plural form ("termini" rather than "termine") it is nearly always with this meaning. In this sense it means both "the terms" (as in words and language, as for example Rosso Fiorentino: "era bonissimo musico, & haveva ottimi termini di Filosofia"; Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 205) and also "the ways" or "methods" (as in the life of Baccio D'Agnolo: "senza saperne pure i termini, & i primi principii"; Vasari, *Vite*, 2: 279).

ence to create meanings beyond those that are seen or read, that is, to read or visualize "beneath" the text or image. It is for this reason that Vasari says his pictorial "inventions [can] . . . imitate the antiques, who beneath these names concealed allegorically the concepts of philosophy." However, a recent study by Émilie Passignat shows that the text rendered in italics above was added before Vasari's manuscript was posthumously published to bring the text into line with ecclesiastical censorship.[69] It is therefore worth investigating further how Vasari's scheme, without the interpolated passage, might trespass on spiritual ideas. Passignat has discussed how comments on poetic allegory locate Vasari's inventions within the realm of fiction, and thus not pertaining to faith. Not doubting that this is true, I believe that there is further evidence within the larger scheme of Vasari's program that encourages a spiritual reading, making this late addition to Vasari's text all the more necessary.

Without the added passage, Vasari says simply that he divided up the elements such that he could paint the stories of the sky near to the sky. Just as the stories of the element of air may lead interpreters to contemplate the philosophical ideas concealed beneath the story, likewise the paintings themselves are depicted over that which they represent: Vasari states, for instance, that he painted the stories of Caelus on the ceiling because he is the "most high God," leaving the story of fire, "which we see and use here below" to be painted on the room's walls, and thus in a more terrestrial place.[70]

Vasari's concept of allegory (or, more precisely, what his editors called allegory) is therefore related to the same impulse that led him to paint history over historical stones; it is, however, clear that Vasari's allegory is very different from that which was discussed in the writings of Paleotti and Gilio. The added passage seems self-consciously to point to sources such as Boccaccio's encyclopedic compilation of antique mythology, the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, which was one of the primary sources for the palazzo paintings.[71] Boccaccio's text includes a defense of poetry, arguing that philosophy is allegorically

69 Passignat, "Cosimo I, Vasari, Palazzo Vecchio e la censura ecclesiastica."

70 "ed in quest'altri maggiori mi tornavano ben composte e con più disegno le storie del padre del Cielo, come più alto Dio; ed ancora per lassare la invenzione del fuoco materiale, che noi veggiamo ed adoperiamo quaggiù . . ." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 19.

71 Vincenzo Catari's *Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi* was another important source. For information on Vasari's use of Boccaccio, see Draper, "Vasari's Decoration in the Palazzo Vecchio," 38–43, and Davis, "Vasari's 'Castration of Caelus.' " Giuseppe Betussi translated Boccaccio's *Genealogia* into Italian in 1547. Earlier works of such literature include the *Ovide moralisé*, the *Gesta romanorum*. On the importance of the *Ovid moralisé*, see Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965), 78n2.

concealed in classical mythology, which for Boccaccio was commensurate with poetry.[72] The terms used by Boccaccio to defend the allegorical content of poetry are the same as those used by Vasari to defend painting. A fable is "a form of discourse," he writes, "which, under guise of invention, illustrates or prove[s] an idea; and, as its superficial aspect is removed, the meaning of the author is clear."[73] Also, poets "should be reckoned of the very number of the philosophers, since they never veil with their inventions anything which is not wholly consonant with philosophy as judged by the opinions of the Ancients."[74] Boccaccio believed that it was the truths of Christian philosophy that were found beneath antique poetry, writing that "the pagan poets are theologians."[75] Mythology was also like Scripture because of its polysemic meanings, whereby "what the poet calls fable or fiction our theologians have named figure."

> The truth of this may be seen . . . if they will but weigh in a true scale the outward literary semblance of the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and other sacred writers on the one hand, with the outward literary semblance of the fiction of poets on the other.[76]

Finally, Boccaccio's theory asserts that poetry has a mystical connection to God by being divinely inspired literature, like Scripture.[77] Boccaccio, therefore, argues that poetry has allegorical levels of meaning not only by virtue of its form, or by "outward literary semblance," but also by virtue of the fact that it

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72 See Charles G. Osgood, introduction to *Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium in an English Version with Introductory Essay and Commentary*, 2nd ed., by Giovanni Boccaccio, trans. Charles G. Osgood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

73 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 48. "Fabula est exemplaris seu demonstrativa sub figmento locutio, cuius amoto cortice, patet intentio fabluantis." Boccaccio, *Genealogia*, 706.

74 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 79. "Sed ex ipso phylosophorum numero computandos, cum ab eis nil preter phylosophie consonum iuxta veterum opinions fabuloso tegature velamine." Boccaccio, *Genealogia*, 731.

75 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 121. "Dum poetas gentiles dicimus esse theologos." Bocaccio, *Genealogia*, 767.

76 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 49. "Et quod poeta fabulam aut fictionem nuncupat, figuram nostri theologi vocavere. Quod nunquid ita sit, videant iudices equiores, equo ponderantes libramine superficiem licterarum visionum Ysaie, ezechielis, Danielis, et aliorum sacrorum hominum et poetarum postea fictionum, et, si in ritu contegendi aut detegendi videant discrepantes, damnationi consentiam." Boccaccio, *Genealogia*, 707.

77 This is noted by Guiseppe Mazzotta, "Boccacio: The Mythographer of the City," 355.

"proceeds from the bosom of God," through the "fervid and exquisite expression" of the poet who "arranges" his "meditations."[78]

The syncretistic overtones of Boccaccio's argument resonate with several writers in the Florentine Academy, including Vasari's iconographic advisor Cosimo Bartoli, who articulates a similar theory in his *Ragionamenti accademici*, particularly in the second dialogue where interlocutors state that there is very little difference "between the religion of the antiques and ours," since they "treated the same things covered and beneath a veil, which today we treat uncovered with clear voices."[79] Even the adoration of sculptures of the antique gods is defended on the grounds that "the ancient philosophers and poets, knowing very well the things [of religion], brought [them] forth beneath a veil, in marvelous mysteries of God."[80] Bartoli's syncretistic ideas may have been influenced by several sources, but Bartoli himself credits the custodian of the Vatican Library, Agostino Steuco.[81] As will be seen below, Bartoli's eclectic syncretistic sources also informed the imagery depicted in the Palazzo Vecchio.

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78 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 39–40. "Qui, ex sinu dei procedens." "Meditatas ordine certo componere, ornare compositum inusitato quodam verborum atque sententiarum contextu, velamento fabuloso atque decenti veritatem contegere." Boccaccio, *Genealogia*, 699. The controversy that may have been initiated by Boccaccio's return to this concept is perhaps evident in the very existence of Boccaccio's lengthy defence.

79 "A questo modo era molto poca la differenzia in fra la religione de gli antichi, & la nostra, quanto al Padre, & al Figliuolo . . . anzi non altra, se non che essi trattarono copertamente, & sotto velami, quelle stesse cose, le quali hoggi noi con chiare voci scopertamente trattiamo, con verità conosciamo, et reverentemente adoriamo." Bartoli, *Ragionamenti accademici* (Venice, 1567), 29v–30r.

80 "ma io non posso gia fare che io non mi maravigli di color, che non seguendo l'oppenione de veri Filosofi, adoravano e tempi de Gentili varii Dii, come per essempio facevano gli Arcadii, i quali havendo fatto una statu quasi d'un' Satiro . . . Io non voglio Signor Cavaliere, che questa cosa vi disturbi, perche se bene ella vi appare in prima vista strana, et di ma[i]o esempio; non riesce poi cosi fatta, à chi filosoficamente la considera impro che i Filosofi et Poeti antichi conoscendo molto bene le cose che noi habbiamo dette di sopra, recarno sotto velami, in maravegliosi misterii di Dio, et dipingendolo in Arcadia in quel modo che voi havete detto, lo chiamarono Pan." Ibid., 31r–v. It was widely believed in the Renaissance that classical mythology could be subject to Christian interpretation. See Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae: Philosophies of Symbolism and their Bearing on Art," 149, and more generally Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953).

81 On Bartoli, Steuco and syncretism, see Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli*, 260–263 with further bibliography; see also Charles B. Schmitt, "Perennial Philosophy: from Agostino Steuco to Leibniz," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966).

FIGURE 22 *Giorgio Vasari*, Castration of Caelus (*1555*). *Sala degli Elementi, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy.*
PHOTO CREDIT: ALINARI / ART RESOURCE, NY.

In a letter that is still preserved, Bartoli provides Vasari with an invention for the central painting on the ceiling of the *Sala degli Elementi*. The painting depicts Saturn castrating his father, Caelus, encircled by allegorical figures, or representations of the ten *potenze*, the "attributes that theologians ascribe to God" (Figure 22).[82]

It has been argued convincingly that Boccaccio was one of the principle sources for this image; however, there is evidence that the ten *potenze* may have been inspired by some writings, encompassing Cabalist and syncretistic ideas, circulating in the Florentine Academy.[83] The *potenze* correspond to the

82 Charles Davis, "Vasari's 'Castration of Caelus,'" 7. On this painting see also Allegri and Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici*, 64.

83 On the Cabalist interpretation of Bartoli's letter, see Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli*, 55–71; Eugenio Garin, "Il tema della 'rinascita' in Giorgio Vasari," in *Rinascite e Rivoluzioni: Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo* (Rome-Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 1975). On the place of God and the cosmos in Vasari's life and writings, and the doctrine of the Sephiroth, see Jean Rouchette, *La Renaissance que nous a léguée Vasari*, chapter 1, and especially 34–44, 42n7. Most recently, the Cabalist aspects of these paintings have been reviewed by Passignat, "Cosimo I, Vasari, Palazzo Vecchio e la censura ecclesiastics," placing these ideas usefully in the context of censorship during the Counter-Reformation.

Cabalist doctrine of Sephiroth, which figure commonly in writings by Christian Cabalists;[84] the Sephiroth appear in Pico della Mirandolla's *Commento . . . sorpa una canzona de amore*, and then closer to Bartoli's circle in Guillaume Postel's *Candelabri typici in Mosis Tabernaculo iussu divino expressi brevis ac dilucida interpretatio* and Pierfrancesco Giambullari's *De gli influssi celesti*, published in his *Lezzioni* in 1551.[85] Reviewing Vasari's sources for his discussion of allegorical painting thus leads us to an ever expanding web of scholarly writings in his literary milieu, the doctrine of which Vasari's posthumous editors may have genuinely sought to obfuscate by signaling to the reader that the program was pure poetic fiction. Furthermore, one of these sources—Giambullari's *Lezzioni*—does shed light on our principal concern: the decorative scheme of above and below correspondences. In his lecture on the *influssi celesti*, Giambullari argues that "the Sky has force in us, and disposes us" toward certain things, such that this "lowest part of the world, touches, by necessity the superior part."[86] The Sephiroth are included in Giambullari's "chain of celestial influences," and he offers as examples of the power that operates through Saturn, its influence over "saturnine men . . . solitary, melancholic animals . . . black and heavy terrestrial gems."[87] He concludes his description, saying that

84 For further bibliography see Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli*, 60n23; On the Sephiroth more generally, see Joseph L. Blau, *The Christian Interpretation of the Cabala in the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), chapter 1; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber, 1968), chapter 1, "Poetic Theology," 24–30.

85 Pico della Mirandola, *Commento dello illustrissimo Signor Conte Joanni Pico Mriandolano sopra una canzona de amore composta da Girolamo Benivieni cittadino fiorentino secondo la mente et opinione de' platonici*, in *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942). Pico mentions the castration of Caelus as a story explained by the "antiqui teologi de' gientili sotto fabulare valamento," 510, and mentions the Sephiroth on 550. Guillaume Postel was associated with the Florentine Academy, see Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli*, 61; Garin, "Il tema della 'rinascita,' " 45. Postel's text, which Garin takes to be Bartoli's probable source, is reproduced in Guillaume Postel, *Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) et son interprétation du candélabre de Moyse en Hébreu, Latin, Italien et Français*, ed. François Secret (Neiuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1966). See also Pierfrancesco Giambullari, *Lezzioni di M. Pierfrancesco Giambullari, lette nella accademia fiorentina* (Florence, 1551), 113–114.

86 "Avvertendovi perô prima che non dovéte maravigliarvi, che io dica il Cielo havere forza in noi, & disporci à le cose che ei ci influisce . . . questa piú bassa parte del Mondo, tocca di necessitá la parte superiore, à ciò che tutto quello che si fâ in questa infima, sifacci mediante la virtú potentissima di quella supréma." Ibid., 92–93.

87 "Questa ordinatissima catena de i celesti influssi, conoscendo i sapientissimi cabalisti, pósero in Dio semplicissimo le dieci Sefirot, ò numerazioni . . ." Ibid., 113. "Lo attributo adunque del nome Elohim, ê Binah, cioê prudenzia, ò intelligenzia: la qual per l'ordine de Troni, influisce nel Cielo di Saturno: Da'l quale diffondendo la sua virtú in tutte le cose di

> because so enchained is this order, that whatever thing here below corresponds step by step with that above, and finally with that at the summit, the supreme which governs all. With reason we could perhaps say that the universe is a most tempered instrument, in which everything has its own cord (*corda*); and every cord parts from God and returns to God . . .[88]

In Giambullari's lectures, there is thus a strong relationship to Vasari's decorative scheme, which treats the celestial gods and the terrestrial gods (the Medici) in such a way that paintings above and below correspond: just as Giambullari argues that the Sephiroth connect celestial and terrestrial spheres, Vasari likewise asserts that his paintings of the Sephiroth and other figures correspond to the historical paintings below. Giambullari's discussion of the macrocosm-microcosm is likely indebted to the *Emerald Table*, a text attributed to Hermes Trismegistus who is much cited in both Giambullari's and Bartoli's works. The alchemist text begins similarly with the words "that which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of one thing."[89]

Thus it appears, based on these sources, that Vasari evoked quasi-synchronistic ideas (later camouflaged as poetic allegories) to justify not only his paintings and his way of reading them, but also their correspondences with the histories on the lower story of the Palazzo. Also, the program obviously flattered the Duke by positing a sympathetic relationship between the "disposition of the heavens" and the "wealth and plenty guaranteed by Medici rule."[90] However, if Vasari and his advisors sought to impress his readers with the remarkable correspondences between his paintings, and thereby to reflect

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quel'dominio; oltra gli huomini satrunini, passa à . . . gli animali solitarii, maninconici & di gran'fatica . . . A le gemme Terrestri, nere, & ponderose . . ." Ibid., 114.

88 "Et perche talemente incatenato ê questo ordine, che qual si voglia cosa di quaggiú corrisponde dimano in mano al superiore; & per quello finalmente al sommo & supremo che governa il tutto: con ragione potremo forse dire, che lo universo è uno instrumento temperatissimo, nel qual ha ogni cosa la corda sua: Et ogni corda, parte da Dio, & à Dio ritorna finalmente per quello ampio cerchio delli Enti, che altra volta vi dichiarai." Ibid., 114–115.

89 Hermes Trismegistus, "The Emerald Table (Tabula smaragdina)," trans. Robert Steele and Dorothea Waley Singer, in *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, ed. Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28. The similarity between Hermes and Vasari's scheme is noted by Julien-Manucci, "Vita privata e vita pubblica," 624; Le Mollé, *Giorgio Vasari: L'homme des Médicis*, briefly discusses Cosimo's interest in alchemy and knowledge of Hermes Trismegisto, 318.

90 See Henk Th. van Veen, *Cosimo I de' Medici and his self-representation*, 26.

syncretistic beliefs, they may likewise have been pleased that his above and below painting scheme harmonized with an influential view on biblical exegesis developed by Hugh of St. Victor, which itself was articulated and constructed with the same architectural metaphors noted in the previous section. Even if one cannot be certain that Vasari described his painting program intentionally to mirror Hugh of St. Victor's model of biblical exegesis, or whether it had become so engrained culturally that it was introduced unconsciously into the *Ragionamenti*, the rich literary associations with this traditional motif are striking. It is tempting to suppose that the spiritual resonances of Vasari's scheme may further have necessitated the allusion to poetic allegory made by Vasari's editors in order to downplay the dangerous commingling of Christian and non-Christian ideas.

Hugh's concept stems from the writings of St. Paul, St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great and many other patristic and medieval authors.[91] As such, it is possible that Vasari might have assimilated these ideas from other sources, and indeed there may be a text closer to Vasari's literary milieu that draws upon this tradition explicitly. Perhaps the best exposition of Hugh's cognitive model is found in his *Didascalicon*, a book in which he instructs students in the art of reading Scripture.[92] He teaches his students that they must "learn history and diligently commit to memory the truth of the deeds [of history]" before trying to understand the spiritual meanings of Scripture.[93] To express how the learning of history ought to be done, Hugh asks his students to envision laying the foundation of a building: learning the historical meaning of Scripture was no different from that which "we see happen in the construction of buildings, where first the foundation is laid, then the structure is raised upon it."[94] Hugh

91 See De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 2: 46–50.

92 The book was written in the late 1120's, and exists in nearly one hundred manuscripts. See Jerome Taylor, introduction to *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, by Hugh of St. Victor, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 4. On the theological influence of the text, also see Roger Baron, "L'influence de Hugues de Saint-Victor," *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 22 (1955), 61.

93 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3. "Hoc nimirum in doctrina fieri oportet, ut videlicet prius historiam discas, et rerum gestarum veritatem a principio repetens, usque ad finem, quid gestum sit, a quibus gestum sit, et ubi gestum sit, diligenter memoriae commendes." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* (Migne, *PL* 176.0799).

94 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.2. "In quo illud ad memoriam revocare non inutile est, quod in aedificiis fieri conspicitur, ubi primum quidem fundamentum ponitur, dehinc fabrica superaedificatur; ad ultimum consummato opere domus colore superducto vestitur." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.2. (Migne, *PL* 176.0799).

thus conflates the two architectural metaphors discussed above: just as St. Paul suggests that the foundation of our body is the Christian faith, Hugh suggests that the foundation of our learning should be sacred history; and secondly, just as Aristotle conceives of memories as walls, Hugh places the foundation of his faith in his memory. As such, the historical meaning of Scripture becomes the foundation of a building built from thoughts themselves. "[No material thing] is required for you," Hugh writes; "you will build a house for the Lord in and of yourself. He will be the craftsman, your heart the site, your thoughts the materials."[95] Hugh frequently returns to the idea that the learning of history could be envisioned as a building within the mind because it could be used to illustrate the process of reading. For, not only is the foundation of the building like the historical meaning of Scripture, the walls built over and supported by the foundation are equivalent to the spiritual interpretation of Scripture.

> Just as you see that every building lacking a foundation cannot stand firm, so also is it in learning. The foundation and principle of sacred learning, however, is history, from which, like honey from the honeycomb, the truth of allegory is extracted. As you are about to build, therefore, "lay first the foundation of history; next, by pursuing the 'typical' meaning, build up a structure in your mind to be a fortress of faith. Last of all, however, through the loveliness of morality, paint the structure over as with the most beautiful colors".[96]

History becomes the foundation that supports all else and, in turn, determines the character of the structure that stands upon it. "The foundation which is under the earth we have said stands for history, and the superstructure which

95 Hugh of St. Victor, *Selected Spiritual Writings*, trans. a religious of C.S.V.M. (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 123. "Nihil horum a te postulatur in te, et de te fabricabis domum Domino Deo tuo. Ipse artifex eris, cor tuum locus, cogitationes tuae materia." Hugh of St. Victor, *De arca Noe morali*, 4.1 (Migne, *PL* 176.0664).

96 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3. "Sed sicut vides, quod omnis aedificatio fundamento carens stabilis esse non potest; sic est etiam in doctrina. Fundamentum autem et principium doctrinae sacrae historia est, de qua quasi mel de favo veritas allegoriae exprimitur. Aedificaturus ergo primum fundamentum historiae pone; deinde per significationem typicam in arcem fidei fabricam mentis erige; ad extremum ergo per mortalitatis gratiam quasi pulcherrimo superducto colore aedificium pinge." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.3 (Migne, *PL* 176.0801). Hugh is quoting Gregory the Great, *Moralium libri*, Epistula missoria iii, as noted by Taylor.

is built upon it we have said suggests allegory."[97] Everything that is built on the foundation "both rests upon it and is fitted to it," implying that, because allegory is extracted from history, all allegory must necessarily correspond to the history upon which it rests just as the walls of a building correspond to the foundation.[98]

Similarly, in Vasari's program for the Palazzo Vecchio, history is the foundation, both in that the actual foundation of the palace is material history and in that the paintings on the first floor of the palace depict the history of Florence and the Medici family. "In the rooms and chambers below [at ground level]," Vasari says, "the stories of the terrestrial Gods of the illustrious house of the Medici are painted."[99] The images on the second floor are allegorical in nature, not because today they would be called allegories, but because of their "spiritual" nature being "the stories of the origins of the celestial Gods."[100] Therefore, the relationship between top floor and bottom floor is much like the relationship between the foundation of Hugh's superstructure and the walls built on top of it: the foundation is grounded in history whereas the structure above deals with the spiritual. Additionally, Vasari's claim that there is "nothing above . . . [that] does not correspond to [that which is] below [it]," heeds Hugh's instruction that the allegory/walls built over the history/foundation correspond completely.[101] Therefore, though Vasari's ideas may relate broadly to the syncretistic beliefs expressed at the Florentine academy, they are also indebted to this medieval exegetical tradition and employ similar architectural metaphors to describe the method of allegorical interpretation, and its dependence on history.[102] The "foundation of history" is a spiritual idea that is not

97 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.4. "Quod sub terra est fundamentum figurare diximus historiam, fabricam quae superaedificatur allegoriam insinuare." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.4 (Migne, *PL* 176.0803).

98 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.4. "Quod etiam primam seriem lapidum super fundamentum collocandorum ad protensam lineam disponi vides; quibus scilicet totum opus reliquum innititur et coaptatur, significatione non caret." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.4 (Migne, *PL* 176.0802).

99 "nelle sale e camere di sotto le storie dipinte delli Dei terresteri della illustrissima casa de'Medici." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 85.

100 "noi abbiamo messo di sopra e situato in que'luogi alti le storie e l'origine delli Dei celesti." Ibid.

101 "non è niente di sopra dipinto, che qui di sotto non corrisponda." Ibid.

102 For a compelling interpretation of these portals, making use of Hugh of St. Victor, see Margot Fassler, "Liturgy and Sacred History in the Twelfth-Century Tympana at Chartres," *The Art Bulletin* 75 (1993).

uniquely found in texts, and in fact it occurs in medieval architectural sculpture, as for instance in the Gothic cathedral at Chartres, where the doorjambs of the west portal are Old Testament kings and queens, literally holding up the sculptures above, which treat of the New Testament.

When Vasari writes that "there above every room responds to those below" he remarks that the rooms have been constructed to correspond to one another with the "rectitude of lead."[103] The phrase "the rectitude" (or correctness) of lead is a reference to the plumb line, or the mobile lead line, a tool used by builders to create a vertical, and by cartographers for surveying land.[104] Vasari would most likely have been familiar with both uses.[105] The metaphor once again shows how the painting programs are conceived through concepts of construction and renovation, whilst also reiterating the one-to-one correspondences between history and mythology (just as a cartographer uses a plumb line to make every point on a map correspond to a real point in space). Hugh of St. Victor likewise mentions such building tools to emphasize that the spiritual levels of Scripture must correspond to the historical level, explaining that "when the foundation has been laid" a mason "stretches out his string in a straight line . . . drops his perpendicular, and then . . . lays the diligently polished stones in a row," making sure that there are no stones that "do not fit with the fixed course he has laid."[106]

An essential character of the allegorical paintings of the palazzo is that they are placed close to the sky. Their status as the "concepts of philosophy" seems to denote that they exist in a super-earthly condition.

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103 "perchè aviamo fatto lassù che ogni stanza risponda a queste da basso per grandezza della pianta simile, e per riscontro di dirittura a piombo." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 86.

104 See Francesca Fiorani, *The Marvel of Maps* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 164.

105 Because the plumb line was used by Egnazio Dante, the cartographer and humanist who created the monumental map cycle in the Guardroba Nuova in the Palazzo Vecchio at the same time that Vasari was painting his murals, Vasari would likely have been familiar with the later use. In addition to Fiorani, *The Marvel of Maps*, also see Jim Bennett, "Cosimo's Cosmography: The Palazzo Vecchio and the History of Museums," in *Musa musaei: studies on scientific instruments and collections in honour of Mara Miniati*, ed. Marco Beretta, Paolo Galluzzi, and Carlo Triarico (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2003).

106 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.4. "Collocato fundamento lineam extendit in directum, perpendiculum demittit, ac deinde lapides diligenter politos in ordinem ponit; alios atque alios deinde quaerit: et si forte aliquos primae dispositioni non respondentes invenerit, accipit limam, praeeminentia praecidit, aspera planat, et informia ad formam reducit; sicque demum reliquis in ordinem dispositis adjungit." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 6.4. (Migne, *PL* 176.0802).

> The rooms above, that now are in a place close to the sky . . . show (and in effect are) the last heaven of this palace, where in pictures today live the origins of the celestial Gods. This denotes that our feet, when they work, take us up high, they raise us from the earth with thoughts and with actions, and walking we go by means of virtuous hard work to find things celestial, considering the effects of the great God, and the seeds of great virtue placed by his Majesty into creatures here below, those who, having been given celestial gifts, on earth do things immortal and grand . . .[107]

The second floor thus suited the paintings of the celestial gods because it was closer to the heavens. This, naturally, is in harmony with the tradition of Christian exegesis, in which upward movement through the superstructure is associated with coming closer to God: ascension, as has been seen in previous chapters, is characteristic of the mystical experience and particularly with the progressive illumination of the manifold layers of Scripture. Moving upward through the superstructure brought the devout mind to progressively deeper states of contemplation, and therefore Hugh writes that "perfection comes to those ascending by means of these steps."[108] Both Vasari and Hugh agree that ascension is a product of mental exercise. Vasari's phrase "with thoughts and with actions, our feet lift us from the earth and walking we go . . . to find celestial things" ("ci levano di terra col pensiero e con le operazioni") implies that it is both a physical exertion to climb the stairs to get to the second floor, whilst also a mental act. Likewise, Hugh describes moving from one level of his superstructure to the next as an act of meditation and contemplation: it is in "contemplation . . . [that] one has a foretaste . . . of what the future reward of good work is,"[109] for which reason "our objective . . . ought to be always to keep

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107 "Dico così, che le stanze di sopra, che ora son poste vicino al cielo, e che non ci ha a ire sopra altra muraglia, nè pitture, e mostrono (ed in effetto sono) l'ultimo cielo di questo palazzo, dove in pitture oggi abitano le origini delli Dei celesti; dinotando che i nostri piedi, cioè l'opere, quando ci portano in altezza, ci lievano di terra col pensiero e con le operazioni, e camminando andiamo per mezzo delle fatiche virtuose a trovare le cose celesti, considerando alli effetti del grande Iddio, ed a'semi delle gran virtù poste da sua Maestà nelle creature quaggiù, le quali, quelle che per dono celeste fanno in terra fra i mortali effetti grandi, sono nominati Dei terrestri, così come lassù in cielo quelli hanno avuto nome e titolo di Dei celesti." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 85–86.

108 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.9. "Vides igitur quomodo per hos gradus ascendentibus perfectio occurrit, ut qui infra remanserit, perfectus esse non possit." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, (Migne, *PL* 176.0797).

109 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.9. "Quinta deinde sequitur contemplatio, in qua quasi quodam praecedentium fructu in hac vita etiam quae sit boni operis merces futura praegustatur." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.9 (Migne, *PL* 176.0797).

ascending."[110] Moving to the second floor of the palazzo thus meant not simply coming to mythological paintings; it signaled coming to paintings that were the product of an entirely different kind of thinking.

In the palazzo, the mental contemplation that raises one's thoughts is paralleled by the physical action of walking up the stairs to the second floor, recalling the importance of the newly constructed system of stairs Vasari built for the Palazzo Vecchio.[111] One of the greatest features of his renovations, these stairs allowed for easy movement from one floor to the other, and facilitated, one might say, moving from historical meaning to the spiritual or allegorical. The conflation of spiritual and architectural ascent is also emphasized in the *Vite*, when, for instance, Vasari admires the stairs connecting the upper and lower basilicas at San Francesco in Assisi: in this case, as noted above, the lower basilica is also a place rich in spiritual history, being the resting place for St. Francis' body. Likewise, in the *Vite*, Vasari describes the progressive renovations of the Palazzo Vecchio by beginning with the foundations (in the *vita* of Arnolfo di Cambio) and moving upward through the structure. In the second age of the history of art, Michelozzo Michelozzi does some renovations to the Palazzo Vecchio, and is credited with strengthening the columns of the palace and with reinforcing the campanile, hence continuing the upward movement from the foundations to walls. However, Vasari stresses that the building was still far from perfect, citing particularly the stairs that prevented comfortable movement through the building.[112] The appearance of this theme in the *Vite* seems to imply that Vasari conceived of his own work as a historian as continuous with his work as a renovator: that is, taking historical parts and making evident their meaning, and, like the stairs of the Palazzo Vecchio, allowing the mind to move from one age to the next. It is not likely a coincidence, therefore, that in the *Vite*, Vasari associates the rebirth of art during the Renaissance with the reform of the church inspired by the flowering of the mendicant movement.[113] Vasari's own renovations of Florence's two

110 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.9. "Propositum ergo nobis debet esse semper ascendere." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.9 (Migne, *PL* 176.0797).

111 See Edmund Pillsbury, "Vasari's Staircase in the Palazzo Vecchio," *Collaboration in Italian Renaissance Art: In Memoriam Charles Seymour, Jr.*, ed. Wendy Stedman Sheard and John T. Paoletti (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Leon Satkowski, *Giorgio Vasari: Architect and Courtier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 50–51.

112 "A una cosa sola non potette l'ingegno di Michelozzo rimediare, cioè, alla scala publica, perche da principio fu male intesa, posta in mal luogo, e fatta malagevole, erta & senza lumi, con gli scaglioni di legno dal primo piano in sù." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 341.

113 "Fu felicissima l'età di Giotto, per tutti coloro che dipingevano; perche in quella i popoli tirati dalla novità, & dalla vaghezza dell'arte, che già era ridotta da gli artefici in maggior

great mendicant churches, Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce, again situates him as the final perfecter of this historical process, who orders the pieces of the church much as he orders the *Vite*.[114]

Spiritual ascent in architecture is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the story of Brunelleschi's dome, in which Vasari alludes to the biblical episode of the tower of Babel, the pride-fueled project through which the earthly city attempted to raise itself to heaven. God's punishment, as is well known, was to divide and multiply human languages such that, as Augustine wrote, "he who refused to understand and obey God's bidding was himself not understood when he gave his bidding to men."[115] Towering pride, and the civic discord of which it is a symptom, already figures in Vasari's history, as I have mentioned, in the Guelph and Ghibelline towers that the Pisano brothers learned to tear down. By contrast, Brunelleschi is able to build the dome for a church which, as we have seen, was built out of the stones of previous Florentine churches (thus making it an emblem of Christian concord), which does not compete with God, but rather does honor to Him.

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grado; avendo le religioni di San Domenico & di San Francesco finito di fabricare le muraglie de' conventi, & delle chiese loro; & in quelle predicando del continovo; tiravano con le predicazioni a la Christiana fede, & a la buona vita, i cuori indurati nelle male opere; & quegli esortavano ad onorare i Santi di Giesu: di sorte che ogni di si fabricavano cappelle, & da gli idioti si facevano dipignere, per desiderio di giugnere in Paradiso. Et cosi costoro co'l muovere gl'intelletti ignoranti de gli huomini, acomodavano le chiese loro con bellissimo ornamento." Vasari, *Vite* (Torrentiniana), 154.

114 "E perche il signor Duca, veramente in tutte le cose eccellentissimo, si compiace non solo nell'edificazioni de' palazzi, città, fortezze, porti, loggie, piazze, giardini, fontane, villaggi, & altre cose somiglianti, belle, magnifiche, & utilissime, e comodo de' suoi popoli: ma anco sommamente in far di nuovo, & ridurre a miglior forma, e piu bellezza, come catolico Prencipe, in Tempii, e le sante Chiese di Dio, a imitazione del gran Re Salamone; ultimamente ha fattomi levare il tramezzo della Chiesa di santa Maria Novella, che gli toglieva tutta la sua bellezza, e fatto un nuovo Choro, e ricchissimo dietro l'altare maggiore, per levar quello, che occupava nel mezzo gran parte di quella Chiesa. Il che fa parere quella, una nuova Chiesa bellissima, come è veramente." Vasari, *Vite* (Giuntina), 3: 1009. Note that Vincenzo Borghini discusses the renovations of churches in this *Discorsi*, mentioning as well that the removal of choir screens is acceptable since their protective function was no longer needed at a time in history when the majority of the population was Christian. See Borghini, *Discorsi*, 433. "come ancora si sono da poco in quà nella maggior parte levati via i sopraddetti tramezzi, che ne' tempi nostri a nulla più non servivano, non ci essendo, Diograzia, nè Infedeli, nè Catecumeni: e così restano oggi le Chiese con molto più bella, e magnifica vista."

115 Augustine, *The City of God*, 16.4.

Artistic and brotherly concord is highlighted in Vasari's *vita* of Brunelleschi, in stark contrast to his main source on the artist's life, the earlier biography by Antonio Manetti. Vasari suggests that Brunelleschi's achievements were born of artistic concord through descriptions of his relationship with Donatello, which is a model of productive competition, as Barolsky also noted;[116] in addition, there is no animosity between Brunelleschi and Ghiberti, which is so prominent in Manetti's account.[117] More pointedly, the problems of language are frequently evoked in Brunelleschi's *vita*: despite having no formal study, we are told that Brunelleschi could converse eloquently, so much so that he was regarded as a second St. Paul.[118] This suggests to Barolsky that Brunelleschi is ultimately a type of St. Paul, and though this interpretation is convincing, there appear to be other allusions to Babel, conjured through references to language.[119] During Brunelleschi's time in Rome, Vasari even seems to credit the architect with unearthing the "ur" language of architecture through proper use of classical orders and proportions, as if to return mankind to an earlier state of history during which mankind was not so mired in confusion.[120] The theme of language is brought into further relief when the Office of the Works of Santa Maria del Fiore brings together many architects from throughout Europe to attend to the problems of building the dome. This scene is briefly described by Manetti, but Vasari amplifies the account to emphasize the confusion of people from many cultures: the architects "were all called into the audience and [the Office of the Works] heard one by one the thoughts of all, and the

116 "Non contento a questo, nell'animo se li destò una voglia della scultura grandissima; & tutto venne poi, che, essendo Donatello giovane, tenuto valente in quella, & in espettazione grande, cominciò Filippo a praticare seco del continuo, & insieme per le virtù l'un dell'altro si posono tanto amore, che l'uno non pareva, che sapesse vivere senza l'altro." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 303. See also Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose*, 57.

117 "Venute dunche le storie a mostra non si satisfacendo Filippo, & Donato se non di quella di Lorenzo, lo giudicarono piu al proposito di quell'opera, che non erano essi, & gl'altri, che havevano fatto le altre storie." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 305. By contrast, see Antonio Manetti, *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi*, ed. Carlachiara Perrone (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 62–63.

118 "E cosi seguitando; dava opera alle cose della Scrittura Christiana, non restando di intervenire alle dispute, & alle prediche delle persone dotte, delle quali faceva tanto capitale per la mirabil memoria sua, che M. Paulo predetto, celebrandolo, usava dire, che nel sentir arguir Filippo gli pareva un nuovo Santo Paulo." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 304.

119 See Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose*, 40.

120 "Fu adunque da lui messo da parte, ordine, per ordine, Dorico, Ionico, & Corintio: e fu tale questo studio, che rimase il suo ingegno capacissimo, di potere veder nella immaginazione, Roma come ella stava, quando non era rovinata." Vasari, *Vite*, 1: 306.

order by which each architect had considered [the problem]" and, going on to describe their manifold and conflicting ideas, he notes that "it was beautiful to hear the strange and diverse opinions on such material."[121] On the other hand, when Brunelleschi gave his advice to the unenlightened Office of Works, "it seemed that Filippo had said something foolish" so they "dismissed him as a beast and a chatterer (cicala)."[122] Through these examples of the problems of language and the eventual success of the dome, the technological daring of which might otherwise have been seen as a type of tower of Babel is instead revealed as the anti-type of Babel, a triumph over confusion and envy through concord. More revealingly, Vasari capitalizes on the theme of spiritual ascension in architecture by illustrating how art's revival can be achieved through Christian virtue. In scattered references and allusions, therefore, Vasari thus conceives of architecture and construction in terms that are invested with spiritual meanings, such that the very city of Florence and its buildings become emblems of both spiritual and artistic renewal.

The Time of Allegory and the Space of History

Ultimately, it is Vasari's preoccupation with historical truth that reveals his profound engagement with the Christian tradition. Vasari's method of finding meaning in the Palazzo Vecchio is deeply indebted to Christian methods of exegesis not because he, or his advisors, or his intellectual sources subscribe to the belief that mythology conceals Christian ideas, but rather because he uses a method of allegorical interpretation that had an important relationship to Christian spirituality: as has already been noted in the previous chapter, Christian allegory distinguishes itself from classical allegory primarily by the emphasis it places on the historical or literal level of meaning. Any allegorical interpretation of Scripture cannot ignore or deny the true, historical meaning

121 "chiamati dunque nella udienza; udirono a uno a uno, l'animo di tutti, & l'ordine, che ciascuno architetto sopra di cio haveva pensato. Et fu cosa bella il sentir le strane, & diverse openioni in tale materia. Percioche chi diceva di far pilastri murati da'l piano della terra, per volgervi su gli archi; & tenere le travate, per reggere il peso; altri, che egli era bene voltarla di spugne, acciò fusse piu leggeri il peso: Et molti si accordavano, a fare un pilastro in mezzo, & condurla a padiglione come quella di S. Giovanni di Fiorenza." Ibid., 1: 308.

122 "che Filippo havesse detto una cosa da sciocchi: & se ne feciono beffe, ridendosi di lui." Ibid., 1: 309. "Et riscaldato nel dire, quanto e' cercava facilitare il concetto suo, accioche eglino, lo intendessino, & credessino tanto veniva proponendo più dubbii, che gli faceva meno credere, & tenerlo una bestia, & una cicala." Ibid.

of the text as the two are inextricably linked together. The importance Vasari places on the reality of the historical foundations, and his insistence that the mythological paintings above them restate truths derived from those historical foundations "with the rectitude of lead," privileges historical meaning. Although it is true that in the alchemical, astrological notions of correspondence observed in Giambullari and Hermes Trismegestus, meanings in history are derived from the influence of the celestial sphere, this is proffered as a universal law rather than a method of interpretation; in Vasari, however, the law of correspondence is explicitly a process of exegesis in which, as in biblical exegesis, the primacy of history is sacred.

It is true that, for all the literary richness of Vasari's interpretive model, he does not go very far to explain many of the correspondences. Rather, Vasari suggests that this is a process the viewer must pursue independently, saying that "it is required of Your Excellency [the Prince] that he goes [through the Palace] always imagining that everything that I have made above corresponds to these things below, that this has always been my intention."[123] Literally one is a map to the other, and even if later historians have doubted the viability or sincerity of Vasari's model, what is ultimately of interest to me is that it was imagined to be possible. The experience of finding spiritual meaning in images, in Vasari as in Paleotti, occurs in the mind of the viewer. In Vasari this can be achieved by moving, in one's mind as well as with one's feet, between the upper and lower levels of the palace and searching for concordance. Similarly, medieval readers of the Bible would lay a foundation of history in their memories upon which they would erect a building of allegory, a castle through which they would move in their thoughts.

The Palazzo Vecchio is divided into two distinct visual realms, which in turn make different demands on the viewer and the artist. On the second floor, Vasari evokes the experience of interpretation as a kind of mental work that requires time and memory. Conversely, in the dialogues about the first floor paintings, the need is not for time, but rather for space in which to paint all the concrete or physical details of the history of Florence. In this section these two needs will be contrasted: the need for time with which to investigate and contemplate, and the space required to remember the physical details of history.

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123 "così in questa, che noi siamo, son quassù di sopra le storie della Dea Opi, adorata, e da tutte le sorti di uomini grandi e piccoli con doni e tributi riconosciuta per madre universale, così come Lorenzo in quesat abbiamo veduto, che da tutte le sorti d'uomini è stato riverito, presentato e tenuto per padre de'consigli e di tutte le virtù; perchè bisogna che Vostra Eccellenza vadia sempre col pensiero immaginandosi che ogni cosa, che io ho fatto di sopra, a queste cose di sotto corrisponda; che così è stata sempre l'intenzione mia." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 124.

Upon hearing about the way Vasari coordinated the decorations of the first and second floors, the Prince speaks of the incredible mental strain that this must have required.

> That these stories of these elders of our house . . . would participate of the qualities of the Celestial Gods . . . would be many times double the mental preparation, and I believed that for you it would be enough that these [images] serve for one effect alone, and not for many.[124]

The Prince also comments on the memory that would be needed to discuss and create the images. "Certainly these paintings make me very content," he says, "and I believe also that he who will hear these inventions will see that you have worked hard the mind and memory."[125] Using "the memory is a wall" metaphor, such comments evoke the much-discussed "memory palaces" of classical antiquity, in which memory as a whole was likened to a building with many rooms. It was such memory palaces that Aristotle likely had in mind when he wrote that individual memories were like walls: in the ancient and medieval art of memory, memorized ideas were thought to be placed in mental rooms.[126] Such an art of memory is described in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a popular Roman treatise on rhetoric that includes a brief section on memory. The unknown author advises that memories are to be placed in, "for example, a house, an intercolumnar space, a recess, an arch, or the like."[127] Hugh of St. Victor's superstructure is itself an example of such a memory store: a mental model constructed like a building to retain memorized information. The Prince's comments—that the program required "double the mental preparation," and "worked hard the mind and memory"—suggest that, like the rooms of memory, the Palazzo was planned in Vasari's mind. It is for this reason that the concordances between above and below work his memory and also, in turn, tire his memory in recalling their significances.

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124 "Adunque queste storie di questi vecchi di casa nostra volete che ancora esse participino delle qualità delli Dei celesti, come avete mostromi nel duca mio signore? Questo sarebbe molto doppia orditura; e mi credevo che vi bastasse che le servissino per uno effotto solo, e non per tanti. Certamente che sarà un gran fare." Ibid., 85.

125 "Certamente ch'io mi contento assai, e credo anche che chi sentirà queste invenzioni vedrà che avete faticato l'ingengo e la memoria. Ora, poi che qui non abbiamo che ragionare più in questa, vogliamo andare in queste alter camere che seguono, piacendovi?" Ibid., 44.

126 In general see Yates, *The Art of Memory*.

127 "Ut aedes, intercolumnium, angulum, fornicem, et alia quae his similia sunt." [Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. and trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1954) 3.16.29.

In this art of memory, mental images are placed in buildings to serve as reminders of things or ideas that one wishes to remember. The author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* writes that "a single image" can "encompass the record of an entire matter by one notation."[128] In keeping with this tradition, Vasari implies that, like a memory image, the paintings on the second floor are prompts that trigger the memory to begin unraveling their meanings. For example, when thanking Vasari for explaining the images to him, the Prince says that he knows "reasoning so much must have tired [Vasari's] tongue and memory."[129] Vasari replies that "it does not tire the memory, because I have in front [of me] the things about which I am reasoning."[130] This comment is curious because it seems so obvious, but it indicates that the images were guides from which Vasari recollected moral meanings. This is consonant with Aristotle's view of recollection, which was achieved by finding the right cue from which to begin recalling memorized material. He asserted that we recollect when "we re-experience one of our former impulses, until at last we experience that which customarily precedes the one which we require," for which reason in recollection we "try to find a starting point for an impulse which will lead to the one [we] seek."[131]

Aristotle imagined recollection like a path, a movement in a certain direction. Likewise, Vasari describes the process of image interpretation as though he were walking through rooms of his mind. As he pursues one series of meanings, he moves down a mental pathway, saying at one point that "it is enough for me to hint at . . . the direction and down which path my thoughts go."[132] In a room decorated with images of the seasons and months of the year, the Prince states that Vasari's reasoning will have the effect of always reminding him of

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128 "Rei totium memoriam saepe una nota et imagine simplici conprehendimus." Ibid., 3.20.33.

129 "Passiamo, che oggi è un giorno, che, essendo caldo, è da comperarlo a denari contanti a fare un'opera simile a questa; ma non ci è se non un male, che so che ragionando tanto vi fo affaticare la lingua e la memoria." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 61. Similar ideas are evident in Bartoli's *Ragionamenti accademici*. See, for instance, one interlocutor, speaking about looking at a painting states "io lo gurado attentamente certo, perche oltre á che e mi piace, io voleva ridurmi alla memoria questa inventione, per potervi dare, oltre al diletto che prendonoal presente gli occhi chi à guardare questi colori, il diletto ancora della mente in considerare i capricci d'altri," 22v–23r.

130 "Non si affatica la memoria, poichè io ho innanzi le cose, di che io ragiono." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 62.

131 Aristotle, *On Memory*, 451b15–452a.

132 "Che molti esempli per ciò si potriano adurre; che mi basta solo accennare a Quella che legge spesso le storie lo indirizzo e a che cammino vanno i miei pensierei." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 82.

his interpretation, remarking that "certainly in a brief time [Vasari has] shown to [him] all of our life [in these images of the months], and [he] will never be in this room without remembering time by time that which [they] do [in these months]."[133] The second floor images are thus cues from which Vasari yields meanings that, having described this mental pathway, will henceforth be recalled in the memory of the Prince. The mythological and allegorical images are thus like memory images in that they require time for the mind to unpack their meanings.

Vasari, however, is unlike both the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Aristotle in that the memory images of the Palazzo Vecchio do not yield one single meaning. The meanings of the paintings described in the *Ragionamenti* serve as a model, but they are not the rule, and Vasari states that other interpretations are possible; a viewer moving down other paths could find different meanings. Accordingly, the process of creating meaning is one that, in theory, could go on forever. It is in this way that the images of the second floor demand time from their viewers. Several times Vasari points out that he will not explain the full meaning of what he has painted, presumably so that this can be continued by the viewer or in the imagination of the reader. "It would be too long if I were to say minutely all the things that the works represent," he writes.[134] At another point, while explaining the relationship between Duke Cosimo and the moral meaning of an allegorical painting, he declares that he will stop reasoning.

> That I leave these now, and no more shall I reason about them, first, because this is not my profession, and because if one wants everything painted here to relate to his Excellency [Cosimo de' Medici] by allegory, this would be a weight on the shoulder of some other major figure's body that is not my own; . . . because my intention purely is not to seem as though from afar I want to pull this material to a meaning relating to His Excellency, mostly because I know that things forced do not please . . . It is enough for me only to show . . . part of my invention, and where I have cast my eye . . . and there are many other interpretations, that for brevity we leave.[135]

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133 "Certamente che mi avete mostro tutta la vita nostra in breve tempo, e non verrò mai in questa stanza che non mi ricordi tempo per tempo quel che noi facciamo." Ibid., 51.

134 "Ma troppo lungo sarei forse, se minutamente io arei a dire il tutto di quel che rappresentano queste fatiche." Ibid., 82.

135 "che gli lascio, e più non ne ragiono, prima, perchè non è mia professionie, poi, perchè chi volesse per allegoria similiare ogni cosa a sua Eccellenza, saria un peso dalle spalle d'altre maggior figura di corpo che non è il mio; ma io non dico già che molte cose che io mi

Labored allegorical interpretations were not pleasing, a theme that occurs in works on biblical exegesis. Hugh of St. Victor, for instance, notes a man who pursued always the most difficult passages of Scripture, saying that his mind "soon began to tire from the greatness of the task and the constancy of the tension, and to be confused by such a great concern." "The human mind," Hugh writes, is "unable to sustain such a burden."[136] A certain amount of difficulty, however, was desirable, perhaps even essential. Boccaccio notes that it is the process of penetrating the veil of fiction that will "enhance the reader's pleasure and support his memory. What we acquire with difficulty and keep with care is always dearer to us."[137] The images on the top floor, therefore, demand time with which to unravel their meanings, and even though the Prince remarks that "that which pleases me is that with one glance of the eye I can see everything without moving," unfolding their meaning could go on for infinity.[138]

On the lower floor, however, space, and not time, is needed to represent as much Florentine history as possible and in as great detail as possible. In these images of historical reality, Vasari paid special attention to portraying the details of Florentine history accurately and correctly, as though he wished to present to his viewers a reality as concrete and material as the historic stones that his renovations preserved. Vasari, for instance, describes the pains he took to paint Medici ancestors based on portraits that were created from life wherever possible. He says that he "used a great diligence in looking for [these

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sono immaginate come pittore, io non le abbia applicate alle qualità e virtù sue, perchè la intenzione mia pura è di non parere che di lontano io voglia tirare a'sensii suoi questa materia, massimamente ch'io conosco che le cose sforzate non gli piacciono, sapendo noi quanto le sue sieno vere e chiare; mi basta solamente mostrare a chi intende, parte della invenzion mia, e dove io ho gettato l'occhio, perchè non cerco in queste storie di sopra volere accomodare tutti i sensi proprj a queste, se di sotto ho fatto le sue come le stanno, e per Adone cacciatore, e Venere, che si godono e contemplono, è fatto per le volontà e amori di loro Eccellenze illustrissime; che mai è stato signore che abbia amato più la consorte sua, che questo, che ne abbia cacciato via le fiere umane piene di vizj, che questo principe; e molte altre etimologie ci sono, che per brevità si lassono." Ibid., 28–29.

136 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.7. "Sed mens humana tantum non sustinens pondus, coepit mox et rei magnitudine, et intentionis jugitate deficere, tantaque hujus importunae occupationis cura confundi, ut non solum jam ab utilibus, sed etiam a necessariis actibus cessaret." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 5.7 (Migne, *PL* 176.0795).

137 Boccaccio, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, 61–62. "dulci labore preposito, delectationi simlu memorieque consulitur; cariora sunt enim, que cum difficultate quesivimus, accuratiusque servantur." Boccaccio, *Genealogia*, 717; Boccaccio is actually quoting the third book of Petrarch's *Invectives*.

138 "e quello che mi piace è, che a una occhiata si vede ogni cosa senza muoversi." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 44.

portraits]; and it has helped greatly that [the Medici] were all great people and the diligence of the masters [painters] of those times [in which the Medici lived], who were quite great . . . made memories [of them]."[139]

The desire to record and represent the true facts of Florentine history required more space than the actual walls of the palazzo provided. Vasari complains repeatedly that he does not have the space to depict the whole history of Florence on the walls of the Palazzo. He says that "it is very difficult for us painters who wish to put in so small a place so many things, and in a painting the space of sixty arms lengths, what there is in truth in more than a hundred thousand."[140] This is in marked contrast to the images on the second floor in which so much could be seen in one glance of the eye. The lack of space led Vasari to think carefully about the angle from which to represent his stories. It was most important to choose a view from which the most historical information could be represented.

> For the largest and best view [from which to paint this story] I chose the piazza of this Palazzo . . . because of its width, as well as for the sites of the windows, the loggias, fences, and other window shutters high and low, I could accommodate more people, that I would not have made this view in another place, [because] again [there] it would not be possible to put all of the story; because our eyes cannot take in in one view alone the space of two thousand.[141]

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139 "Signor mio, egli si è usato una gran diligenza in cercarli; e ci ha aiutato assai che questi, di chi si ragiona, sono state tutte persone grandi, e la diligenza de'masetri di quelli tempi, che sono pure stati assai, ed eccellenti in pittura e scultura, i quali n'hanno fatto memoria nell'opere che in que'tempi dipinsono in Fiorenza." Ibid., 87. Vasari's process for identifying portraits is discussed by Charles Hope, "Historical Portraits in the 'Lives' and in the Frescoes of Giorgio Vasari," in *Giorgio Vasari: Tra decorazione ambientale e storiografia artistica* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1985). On historical accuracy and archeological research in Vasari's paintings and Borghini's programs, see Rubinstein, "Vasari's Painting of the Foundation of Florence," and Rick Scorza, "Vasari's Painting of the 'Terzo Cercio' in the Palazzo Vecchio: A Reconstruction of Medieval Florence," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Jacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

140 "Signor Principe, gli è molto difficile a noi pittori voler mettere in sì poco luogo tante cose, ed in sessanta braccia quadre quel che non capì nel vero in più di centomila; e, come Quella sa, noi non possiamo rappresentare se non un solo atto in una storia, come per legge e buono uso hanno sempre costumato di fare i migliori maestri, come si vede osservato nelle storie loro." Vasari, *Ragionamenti*, 172.

141 "Dove considerando io voler dipignere questa magnificenza, degna per l'una e per l'altra parte di tanto onore, ho scelto per veduta maggiore e migliore la piazza di questo palazzo,

The need for space emphasized the indexical nature of these images. Vasari needed space because every point on a physical object had to have its correspondent in the painting. But beyond the need for space, Vasari searched for the best way to transfer the contents of material reality to painting. Not even linear perspective was good enough, since, in images painted in perspective, things in front conceal what is behind them.

> One must know that not easily is it possible to make this story by means of a natural view, and with the ways that are ordinarily used to draw cities or countrysides, in which they are portrayed from nature by the eye, given that high things cut from view those that are shorter. Therefore, it occurs that, if you are on the top of a mountain, you cannot make designs of all its planes, valleys and roots.[142]

Vasari then describes the process by which he was able to paint the image, gathering as much physical detail onto the limited space of the Palazzo wall as possible. He recounts the creation of a view of Florence, constructed from multiple views and thereby permitting him to get the perspectival view from afar, as well as detailed views up close. Vasari thus desired not to create the view of what one person had seen, but rather a kind of universal view, something objective rather than subjective.

> I placed myself to design [the view] in the highest place, and also on the roof of a house to discover, beyond the places most near, also those of San Giorgio, San Miniato, San Gaggio [etc.] . . . But your Excellency knows that, even though I was so high, I could not see all of Florence because the mountains of Gallo and Giramonte were cutting the view of the gate of San Miniato and that of San Niccolò . . . So, to make my *disegno* come closer [to the entire view], and encompass all that there

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come luogo più publico e capo principale, pensando, sì per larghezza come per i luoghi de'siti delle finestre, logge, muricciuoli, ed altri sporti alti e bassi, potervi accomodare più gente, che non arei fatto in altro luogo che in questa veduta, ancora che tutta la storia non sia stato possibil mettervi; perchè gli occhi nostri non possono ricorre in una vista sola lo spazio di due miglia, che teneva questa onorata ordinanza, vi basterà solo che io vi mostri tutto quello che in una sola veduta [può] mostrare questa piazza." Ibid., 142.

142 "Vostra Eccelenza dice il vero: ma ha da sapere che male agevolmente si poteva far questa storia per via di veduta naturale, e nel modo che si sogliono ordinariamente disegnare le città ed i paesi, che si ritraggono a occhiate del naturale, attesochè tutte le cose alte tolgono la vista a quelle che sono più basse; quindi avviene che, se voi siete in su la sommità d'un monte, non potete disegnare tutti i piani, le valli e le radici di quello." Ibid., 174.

> was in that country, I used this method to help with art what I was missing from nature. I took the compass and placed it on the roof of a house and looked through the north view, from which I had begun designing the mountains, the houses and the spaces most close . . . And it helped me very much that having elevated the map of around Florence by one mile, accompanying it with the view of the houses [drawn] from the north line, I reduced that which is held in twenty miles of country into six arms' length of measured space . . .[143]

Vasari's description of his process is complex, and cannot be unpacked in detail here; what is of interest for the purpose of my discussion is his evident desire to develop a method to create views that overcomes the restrictions of unaided sight in order to make more space and information visible in his images.[144] The Medici court was a context in which such explorations in cartographic measurements were actively researched, and there still exist examples of the kinds of instruments that Vasari may have used to create this view. Notably, Cosimo Bartoli wrote a book on how to measure distances.[145] It is therefore perhaps relevant that in his *Ragionamenti accademici* he discusses the spiritual value of

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143 "mi posi a disegnarla nel più alto luogo potetti, ed anco in sul tetto di una casa per scoprire, oltra i luoghi vicini, ancora quelli e di S. Giorgio, e di S. Miniato, e di S. Gaggio, e di Monte Oliveto; ma Vostra Eccellenza sappia, ancorché io fussi sì alto, io non poteva veder tutta Firenze, perché il monte del Gallo e del Giramonte mi toglievano il veder la porta S. Miniato, e quella di S. Niccolò, ed il ponte Rubaconte, e molti altri luoghi della città, tanto sono sotto i monti; dove, per fare che il mio disegno venisse più appunto, e comprendesse tutto quello che era in quel paese, tenni questo modo per aiutar con l'arte dove ancora mi mancava la natura; presi la bussola e la fermai sul tetto di quella casa, e traguardai con una linea per il dritto a tramontana, che di quivi avevo cominciato a disegnare, i monti, e le case, e i luoghi più vicini, e la facevo battere di mano in mano nella sommità di que' luoghi per la maggior veduta; e mi aiutò assai che avendo levato la pianta d'intorno a Firenze un miglio, accompagnandola con la veduta delle case per quella linea di tramontana, ho ridotto quel che tiene venti miglia di paese in sei braccia di luogo misurato . . ." Ibid., 174–175.

144 For interpretations of this passage, see commentary of Le Mollé in Vasari, *Entretiens du Palazzo Vecchio*, 276n80; and Draper, "Vasari's Decorations in the Palazzo Vecchio," 486n10.

145 On the use of the "bussola," see Filippo Camerota, introduction to *Raccolto fatto dal Cav:re Giorgio Vasari: di varii instrumenti per misurare con la vista*, by Giorgio Vasari, Il Giovane (Florence: Giunti, 1996), 89–106, 145 no. 20, and 149 no. 27. See also Filippo Camerota, and Mara Miniati, *I Medici e le scienze: Strumenti e macchine nelle collezioni granducali* (Florence: Giunti, 2008), 110–111. Cosimo Bartoli, *Del modo di misurare le distantie, le superficie, i corpi, le piante . . .* (Venice, 1564).

such measurements. In this passage, an interlocutor sets about to describe an invention he has for an allegorical representation of Truth, figured by a beautiful woman, naked though covered with a transparent veil. By this invention he intends to convey that "the truth of things is only veiled by a veil so subtle and transparent that the sight of the eyes of he who attentively looks at it, passes [through] this veil, and discerns so well that it is as if she were completely nude."[146] Then Bartoli writes that in the same image with Truth are a group of men, some of whom "read certain books, and some others . . . go measuring the world . . . taking [measurements] of the heights and distances of the sky . . . and look to find and to know the properties and the nature of the universe."[147] Thus, to go measuring the world as Vasari did to create his paintings, was nothing less than to look through the veil to discover truth. It is no wonder then that Vasari had the impulse to paint the history of Florence with such clarity and accuracy.

This analysis of the difference between the first and second floors of the Palazzo reveals Vasari's instinct to derive spiritual and allegorical meanings from concrete, historical reality. Vasari's method of interpretation, like the theory of art developed by Paleotti, was rooted in the tradition of Christian exegesis, which always sought to pull infinite spiritual meaning from the finite details of historical reality. As Hugh of St. Victor writes, exegesis "begins from things, which are finite . . . and proceeds in the direction of things, which are infinite, or undefined.[148] Vasari and Bartoli's *Ragionamenti* differ, of course, in that the historical accuracy is of non-biblical subject matter, and the spirituality to which this provides access is, one might say, a secularized version of Christian morality, expanded to include ancient mythology. Even in Vasari's

146 "conciosia che la verità delle cose, e solamente velata da un velo, tanto sottile, & transparente, che la veduta de gl'occhi di chi attentamente la riguarda, trapassa esso velo, & la discerne benissimo non altrimenti, che se fusse ignuda del tutto." Bartoli, *Ragoinamenti accadmici*, 56r.

147 "& chi da costei si lascia persuadere, gli, e poi concesso dal tempo il cavallo Bianco, che ella con l'una delle mani come vedete quasi che accenando, glielo dimostra; sopra del qual chi vacalca cammina inverso il monte che noi vedete da questa danda; & per il viaggio riscontra un drapello d'huomini, de quali alcuni come vedete leggono certi libri; alcuni altri con seste, & con squadre, vanno misurando il mondo; . . . pigliano l'altezza, & le distanze del Cielo; . . . & vanno cercando, di conoscere la proprietà, & la natura dell'universo." Ibid., 56r.

148 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 3.10. "Omnis divisio incipit a finitis, et ad infinita usque progreditur. Omne autem finitum magis notum est, et scientia comprehensibile. Doctrina autem ab his quae magis nota sunt incipit; et per eorum notitiam ad scientiam eorum quae latent pertingit." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 3.10 (Migne, *PL* 176.0772).

highly secular context, however, allegory resonates in the tradition of Christian exegesis.

As noted in the previous chapter, it is easy to dismiss the dogmatic, theological theory of allegory in the works of Paleotti, Gilio and other theologians as products of the conservative religious environment in which they were written. Similarly, it would be easy simply to say that Vasari's concept of allegory is lacking in any sincere spiritual feeling. What such oversimplifications miss, however, is that both of these concepts of visual allegory share a common aesthetic impulse: the desire for allegorical interpretations to be born from historical truth. Both these authors share a desire for allegorical or spiritual meaning to be yielded from historically accurate imagery (Scriptural history in the case of Paleotti; Florentine history in the case of Vasari). Such similar aesthetic desires in the cases of two such different writers cannot be explained by local historical context alone; rather, they are the products of a shared cultural history that extends beyond local political and religious contexts. In this case, the wider context is clearly that of Christian faith, an intellectual tradition that understood the meaning of its own history as reducible to the divine plan of God, whose son had come to earth and walked among men at a time in relation to which all future moments would endlessly be measured. The pleasures or experiences found in images perceived to be historically accurate stem from notions of history that are tightly woven to Christian beliefs.

Conclusion

By looking at Italian writings on art from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, this study has aimed to deepen our understanding of how objects that are now called "works of art" were profoundly invested in the Christian faith. Although it is a given that these objects were used for ritual purposes and depicted religious subjects, the writings on art provide us with a subjective account of the religious experiences of images. Traversing a significant period of cultural change, these texts demonstrate a variety of attitudes that reflect a range of spiritual concerns: both Alberti and Leonardo conceptualize painting in the terms of contemplative study; a variety of authors in the sixteenth century bear witness to the problems of imagining the faces of holy people; Gabriele Paleotti defines the problems of pictorial invention with the vocabulary of Scriptural exegesis; Francesco Bocchi uses the language of spiritual conversion and compunction to describe the experience of sacred art; and finally Giorgio Vasari rehearses many spiritual metaphors to establish the virtue of both sacred and secular art and architecture. Amidst this range of attitudes it is difficult to generalize on the presence of spiritual themes in Renaissance writings on art, and throughout this study I have aimed to be sensitive to the cultural specificity in which certain texts were produced.

One of the dominant themes throughout the central chapters of this book has been the exploration of the artist's process as a spiritual process. Although the Renaissance idea of the "divine artist" has been discussed in art-historical literature, this study has explored descriptions of artistic practice that more subtly convey the idea that the artist was engaged in spiritual work, calling upon his or her faith when embarking upon the task of representing sacred history. The artist, like any person, could move by degrees to conform to the will of God. Far from making objects of art less spiritually potent, the communicative efficacy of naturalistic images appears to have been taken as evidence of the importance of retaining a religiously pious intention as an artist.

Naturalistic images, which seemed to 'unveil' history (not merely teach it to the illiterate, as Gregory the Great argued), had the ability to overcome some of the limitations of words: for instance, their dependence on time and linguistic convention. If writers on art share anything in common with regard to their use of spiritual themes, it may be the recognition that the techniques of naturalism, which themselves were changing throughout the period in question, inspired a rethinking of the spiritual ideas that were central to the experience of art. The naturalistic image created a new kind of relationship between the viewer and the art object and thus spiritual themes were reworked in order to

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comprehend the new qualities of images. There are, therefore, very good reasons for the lingering influence of medieval spiritual themes in Renaissance literature on art, though these sources have often been overlooked or believed to be of importance only in the works of ecclesiastical writers. On the contrary, as has been argued here, Renaissance literature on art is deeply immersed in the themes and metaphors of Christian literature and the beliefs of Christian faith and philosophy. Confronting the spiritual nature of this literature forces us to re-evaluate some of our assumptions about the category of art itself in the Italian Renaissance.

In the introduction it was stated that the spiritual themes under investigation would reveal that the techniques of naturalism brought the object of art closer to meaning than previous signs had. Although the degrees to which this is true vary from writer to writer, I do believe that in general these texts bear witness to this idea. The writer who might have agreed with this statement most earnestly is Francesco Bocchi, whose mystical experience of art was the focus of the first chapter. He seems most consciously to have conceptualized the artist's task as approaching the virtue of the mark made by God's hand in the Annunziata image. Although by contrast Alberti does not seem to have supported such a mystical interpretation, by viewing his text through the lens of Christian humanism and the liberal arts, we see how the painter's art is likewise concerned for an internal meditative process, through which the artist's mind and artistic products are elevated. Similarly, Vasari was manifestly not a mystic, but he appropriated many spiritual metaphors to articulate the value of his secular, historical paintings.

As this study has shown, intellectual writings on art display an investment in Christian experiences even when these texts align themselves with literature from classical antiquity. Ultimately, the place of classical literature within the spiritual themes observed here in the Renaissance literature on art is difficult to discern. In many respects the very idea of a literature on art was inspired by the revival of classical texts in which visual art was thought to be a suitable topic for literary discourse. Likewise, the literature on art, as has been seen, is filled with citations from classical literature. However, as has been observed throughout this study, classical sources were often appropriated to justify already held Christian beliefs. Given the evidence presented in this book, it seems reasonable to propose that the values that governed the experience and judgment of art in the Renaissance were, to a great extent, Christian values.

Having considered this argument, one may wonder how the painstaking citation of classical sources found in Renaissance art literature may be accounted for if, as is suggested here, the overall experiences they are mobilized to express are Christian experiences. I certainly do not wish to be misinterpreted as

advancing the argument that classical texts were an arbitrary addition to the literature on art. What, therefore, is the nature of the relationship between the classical citations and the Christian ideas discussed here? Any tentative response to this question must first be prefaced by noting that it is difficult to make sweeping generalizations, for the nature of the relationship between classical literature and Christian belief changes from author to author: in the case of Gilio, for instance, it appears that the humanist language is an attempt to communicate the theological concerns of the Counter-Reformation in the terminology used to discuss art.[1] In other cases, such as Alberti, the Christian ideas are not so much disguised as thoroughly integrated into the humanist project of confronting the classical and Christian traditions. It might be tentatively suggested that the experience of new kinds of images, and the intellectual awareness of newly revived classical texts, necessitated moving Christian themes beyond a given framework. As such, these writers found in classical sources a tradition of writing about art that helped them to come to terms with the experience of looking at the vastly new kinds of images that were being produced during the Renaissance. Despite this influx of new literature on the one hand, and new art on the other, the traditions and practices of Christian belief remained continuous, though evolving. Thus, rather than displacing classical sources as the fundamental intellectual heritage for writings on art, this study rather has sought to add complexity to our readings of these texts, demonstrating how they bear witness to the multiple experiences of the Christian faith supported by images during the Italian Renaissance.

Beyond adding complexity to our readings of Renaissance writings on art, the results of this study hopefully raise some fundamental questions regarding the nature of the tradition of visual art that extends from the Renaissance, in many ways, to the present day. By way of conclusion, I hope the reader will permit some less formal reflections on these questions, even if ultimately a thorough examination of these problems exceeds the scope of this study. It is often posited in a general way that many of the concepts frequently associated with the modern Western concept of 'art' arose during the Renaissance—most notably the personality of the artist—and the emergence of these concepts is similarly yoked to the burgeoning literature on art. The rise of the status of the artist, and the accompanying literary treatment that artists are given in the hands of writers such as Vasari, is a narrative that is fundamental to the study of Renaissance art, as evident by its perennial appearance in undergraduate lectures textbooks. Sometimes linked to the growing attention given to the figure of the artist is the equally fundamental concept of rising secularism in

1 See Scavizzi, *Controversy on Images*, chapter 6.

Renaissance art, which likewise still factors as a central theme in narratives of Renaissance art, though perhaps less so than in previous decades. This theme, too, is perceived in the literary sources, notably in its use of classical motifs. Not only did the literature of the period play a fundamental part in these changes, it was instrumental in developing a language with which to discuss and reflect upon art for future generations; although one would not want to belabor the point, the fact that some of the writings discussed here are still readily available in paperback—Alberti, Leonardo, Vasari—suggests that these texts may have had an impact that extends beyond the confines of Italy between 1400–1600. It is natural to contemplate, therefore, to what degree the spiritual themes here observed might merely be described as the last vestiges of a tradition that the Renaissance was growing out of, or if it is possible that these spiritual themes became fundamentally embedded within the framework and discourses of art that the Western tradition of art has inherited from the Renaissance.

The spiritual work of the artist has been one of the dominant themes throughout the central chapters of this study, and my concluding remarks therefore will deal with two other themes that might otherwise be overshadowed by this first one, and which, correspondingly, are treated mostly in the opening and closing chapters. The centrality of history is a topic of concern in the final two chapters: Paleotti, as noted, follows the medieval exegetes by insisting on the primacy of historical accuracy in images, and this preoccupation reappears in the writings of his contemporaries, Dolce and Gilio among others, in their use of the circumstances as tools of invention. What makes Paleotti a fascinating example is his belief that history is the foundation for further allegorical exegesis, the implication thereby being that images that are grounded in history may likewise be platforms for further spiritual ascension. Although we may be tempted to see this belief as pertaining only to a limited number of people who shared the education (and perhaps fervor) of Paleotti, the reappearance of similar concepts in writings about secular paintings by Vasari might encourage us to think otherwise. The historical truth of Florence was likewise for Vasari the matter through which he envisioned viewers of his paintings ascending to a different sort of contemplation, though one still clearly articulated through Christian concepts and metaphors. This suggests that the interest in historical accuracy in the Western tradition of art might, at the very least, usefully be investigated in light of the Christian tradition of exegesis to see if lingering attachment to this spiritual theme exists. Historical accuracy still remains a recurring concern in art criticism, for example in the popular and learned discourse on contemporary film and literature, and an understanding of our interest in art as history might be gained by being

attentive to the Christian meanings of history for writers on art during the Renaissance.

Returning to the first chapter of this study, the theme of compunction has been a unifying lens throughout this book, and its presence in the literature on art I believe poses many questions about the desires of viewers of art objects. Although Bocchi took great pains to understand the experience of religious compunction in light of Aristotle's "catharsis," it might also be useful to reintegrate the notion of Christian compunction, not only into our understandings of Renaissance art, but also the artistic traditions that subsequent generations inherited from it. Bocchi's notion of compunction seemingly paradoxically binds the material with the immaterial: it is an experience of spiritual lifting that springs from our troubled relationship to matter. Paleotti's notion of moving from history to allegory (and by extension, Vasari's notion as well) implies a duality that is not unrelated to Bocchi's compunction: both start with material reality and move upward to the spiritual and immaterial. In interrogating the attitudes that have been embedded into the European traditions of art, we may wish to be similarly attentive to the seemingly paradoxical obsessions with material truths and corresponding weightlessness that pervade aesthetic experiences. Some readers may object to viewing subsequent traditions in art theory and criticism from the perspective of these sources, and my intention is not to deny that these subsequent writings and traditions must be dealt with on their own terms; however, I hope this study will provide material with which to renew our investigations of the artistic heritage of the Renaissance with a greater understanding of the spiritual preoccupations that shaped the writings on art of this period.

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